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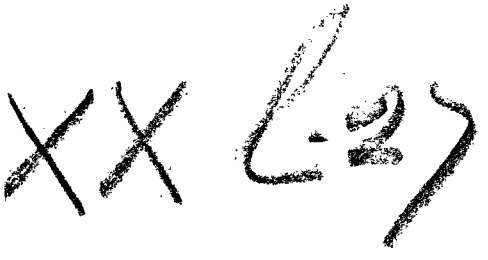
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Frontispiece.

EDGAR QUINET

HIS EARLY LIFE AND WRITINGS

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BY

RICHARD HEATH

La plante est visible dans son germe. Et qui ne voudrait, s'il le pouvait, voir un monde dans l'embryon. *Histoire de mes idées.*

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WITH PORTRAITS, ILLUSTRATIONS, AND AN AUTOGRAPHIC LETTER

xx l 2

LONDON
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1881

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DEDICATED

TO THE MEMORY

OF

ONE WHO DESIRED MUCH TO SEE THIS BOOK

SHE LIVES IN ITS PAGES

WITH MANY OF HER SISTERS

IDEALISED BY

THE POET

AS

THE ANGEL RACHEL

PREFACE.

THIS book is designed to make known to English readers one of the greatest, purest, most far-seeing minds of the age. Those who are best acquainted with Edgar Quinet will feel this to be no exaggerated description. By a simple account of his early life and writings, I propose to indicate the origin of his character and thoughts, and to follow their development until he is fairly launched on the world of action. This would be great temerity on my part if I relied on my own ability. But, in the first place, Edgar Quinet has himself shown the way in an autobiographic fragment called "Histoire de mes Idées;" and though that history does not go beyond his eighteenth year, it is supplemented by two volumes of letters, by several documents, and many explanatory notes published since his death by his widow; and by the autobiographic character of all his works. For it is the peculiarity of Edgar Quinet's philosophy that he found the whole history of Humanity in his own soul. His inner life, then, with all its experiences, could not fail to be for him an inexhaustible source of knowledge, and one from which he constantly drew in writing his numerous works.

If, then, this book should prove at all successful in its object, it will be due, in the first place, to Edgar Quinet having made the way easy, and, in the second, to my going constantly to a source of inspiration open to all. On no other grounds could I venture to present this book to those who I have

reason to believe will be its readers. But knowing it to be a work of conscience from beginning to end, knowing that I have spared no pains to make it as perfect as possible, I offer it fearlessly, certain that whatever its shortcomings, it must, from the nature of its subject, be found a real contribution to the literature of the day, a real help to the elucidation of some most important problems.

For Quinet wrestled with the spirit of the age during a long night, refusing to let it go until he had learnt its secret and obtained its blessing. The man who has done this must prevail. It matters little, as regards Quinet, whether this book effects its object or no; he is certain in the end to be acknowledged a prince among thinkers. He can afford to wait, but we cannot; for he is the kind of teacher we need—the teacher who will revive not only our faith in Truth, Justice, Liberty, but in the History of Humanity, in the Order of Nature, and in that Religion which is the chief source of life and purification:—the religion of Jesus Christ.

I do not say this in the interest of any Church or of any theology, for Quinet acknowledged neither. A man more free from ecclesiastical ties or theologic bias it would be difficult to find; to identify him, therefore, with any formulated view of modern Christianity would be entirely misleading. But if words mean anything, there was to Quinet no force in the history of Humanity so pure and strong as that life lived eighteen hundred and fifty years ago in Galilee and Jerusalem. It was not in his nature to entertain any theological conception of that life; it was simply to him the expression of a soul that found itself too large for this universe, an infinite soul from which had sprung, as from the well-head of some mighty river, that moral influence, that self-regenerative power which, working in the civilisation of the modern world, has rendered it so progressive and beneficent.

And this thought was in entire conformity with one of the leading ideas of Quinet's teaching: that Religion is the formative power in history, the real substance of Humanity, the force that moulds the life of every nation as well as every man; and with this other: that the nature of every religion depends on

the nature of the soul of its founder. If, then, the soul of the Christ was infinite, it follows that his religion is capable of infinite expansion; a thought borne out by several remarkable passages in Quinet's writings, some of which will be found in this book.

No one was more alive to the corruptions of Christianity than Edgar Quinet; in his more purely historical works he has traced the development of a Catholic Brahminism and a Catholic Buddhism in Europe, and their blighting effects on the countries which have remained influenced by Romanism; and in one of his latest works he has signalled the rising in Europe, in our own day, of a Brahminism and a Buddhism more thoroughly Oriental than that of the Middle Ages.

I should extend this preface indefinitely were I to attempt any delineation of Quinet as a man, a philosopher, a poet, and a patriot. I will only refer to one point which springs out of what has just been said, and which to my mind constitutes his highest claim to attention. It is the possession of what he called "philosophic intuition," but which I cannot distinguish from what both the Hebrew and Christian Churches have always understood by "the gift of prophecy." Dr. Edward Dowden, in his essay on Edgar Quinet, has said most happily that Quinet was one of those men that made the conscience of a nation; may we not say that he was one of those men that make part of the conscience of Humanity, and are not such its true prophets? if there be any meaning in the word.

I shall say no more except to express my unfeigned thanks to all who have helped me to produce this book. Conscious of my own incapacity, I have sought aid, human and divine, and have received it in a way quite surprising. If I were to record the names of all who have helped me by sympathy or subscription, it would look like self-glorification. I cannot, however, refrain from thanking by name those who have actually laboured with me to produce this work. To Madame Edgar Quinet for many notes, and especially for the permission to copy some precious family portraits; to Professor Flint of Edinburgh, to Monsieur and Madame Alfred Dumesnil of Vascœil, and to Mr. and Mrs. M. W. Moggridge of Leatherhead, for their careful

supervision of the whole work, I cannot sufficiently express my obligation. Without the help of so constant and faithful a friend and critic as Mr. Moggridge, the work would never have been what it is. I have also to thank Monsieur Léon Feer, of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris; Mr. Henry Stevens, the eminent bibliographer, and Dr. Whittemore of Sutton, for incidental help tending to its improvement. Lastly, it owes much to the skilful rendering of the portraits by my friend Mr. Charles Butterworth.

For all the opinions, however, in this preface, or for any view of Quinet's life and writings taken in this work, I am alone responsible.

The letter inserted opposite p. 28 is a facsimile of one written by Edgar Quinet from College at Bourg in the spring of 1816; the portrait is probably a year earlier in date. Thus they both belong to the most interesting period of his life.

RICHARD HEATH.



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Book I.

GENESIS.

"If a man would truly attend to the course of his inner life he would discover the entire series of the ages buried, as it were, in his own mind."

—*Introduction to Herder.*



adieu mon très cher
cher très honorable enfant. ah
Dieu veille sur toi

Eugénie Quinet-Rozat (1807, *at the age of 23*).

To face p. 3.

CHAPTER I.

BOURG, WESEL. 1803–1807.

"Never, perhaps, was a child surrounded by persons of a more opposite character."—*Mes Idées.*

EDGAR QUINET was born February the 17th, 1803, at Bourg, the chief town of Ain in France, a department bordering on Switzerland. When he came into the world the Temple of Janus was closed. But the very next day, the second of his life, it was re-opened, and the fiends of war came hurrying out to desolate Europe for more than twelve years.

The babe who thus made its appearance at so unpropitious an hour was a pale-faced little creature, and it was doubtful whether its exit would not be almost coeval with its entry.

The Quinets were an old Catholic family established in *Bresse* for three centuries. Edgar's grandfather, Philibert Quinet, was *Maire* of Bourg, his grandmother being the daughter of a lawyer in the Dauphiny. She was a character. A conventual life of some years had made her terribly hard. Her domestic discipline was more than monastic; once a week she employed a *garde-de-ville* to whip her three children (one was a girl) naughty or not. When her son was only three she shut him up in a drawer. When he was a young man she had all the flowers he loved torn up; and when he was fifty years old she rebuked him as unceremoniously as if he were still a boy. This awful old lady had a strange

admiration for beauty. She surrounded herself with engravings and works of art, and would have no domestic in her employ who had not regular features. There must have been something beautiful in the face of her new-born grandson, since, at the sight of him, she relaxed her sternness and said, "He will have mind."

The son who was treated so severely was the father of Edgar Quinet, and his early experiences ought not to be forgotten in estimating his relations with his own son. Driven from home by these austerities, Jerome Quinet enrolled himself among the volunteers of '92. His energetic intellect and strong will found ample scope in the activities of the time. Although just by nature and principle, and really kind in heart, he inherited something of the stern and repellent manner of his mother. If his choice in marriage be any indication, he must also have had her appreciation of beauty; for his wife possessed that gift in a triple degree.

Eugénie Rozat Lagis was on the paternal side of an old Calvinist family, the Rozats of the south of France, while on the maternal, she was descended from Italian Huguenots, the Lagis of Verona, who, at the time of the Reformation, had taken refuge in Geneva. Being in the diplomatic service, her father travelled about a great deal, and this course of life early developed the intellect and self-reliance of his daughter. Educated in Switzerland and at Versailles, she was a very unique mixture of solid Genevan principles, with the stylish manners, bold ideas, and restless curiosity of old French society. As a school-girl of ten years of age, she had resisted the attempts of certain high dignitaries to bring her into the Roman Church. And yet she does not appear to have felt the slightest difficulty in marrying into a Catholic family, or in having her children baptized into their religion. The fact was, that she and her husband were really of the same faith, both being ardent believers in the principles of the Revolution, and caring little for

theological dogmas. Jerome Quinet's admiration for his wife was unbounded, and with relation to his children he seems to have generally yielded to her judgment. Perhaps this cost him little, as he does not appear to have had much sympathy for the young. His derisive tone and the stare of his great blue eyes frightened Edgar. Wrapt up in his own thoughts and projects, M. Quinet permitted all the affections of the family to centre in the mother, who was quite worthy of this confidence.

Madame Quinet's face portrayed the character of her mind; great black eyes sparkling with light, yet full of depth and feeling, a fine forehead set in a frame of long black ringlets, a most engaging smile, its whole contour was charming.

Edgar Quinet possessed his mother's intense, impulsive nature. He had her gaiety and joy of heart and mind, and suffered as she did at times, from an unreasonable melancholy.

Another person who exercised some influence over his childhood was his aunt, the daughter of the old lady who believed in beauty, and in having her children whipped once a week. Under this system Madame Destaillades had developed into a hater of all severity, and a rebel against every yoke. She would a thousand times rather be unjust than unkind. She petted every creature she came across; animals she loved exceedingly, especially ugly ones, because they were the most miserable. Conventionalism she abominated, the freedom of the country was her delight, the wilder and more uncultivated the better she liked it. Her chosen dwelling-place was a little house in a wood. There was no pain she would not endure that she might have the pleasure of spoiling her little nephew. He might yoke her to his plough, strike her with the goad, be as wilful as he chose, she found it all perfectly adorable.

As a granite rock is sometimes concealed by soft ver-

dure which the ever-changing atmosphere dapples with alternate light and shade, so beneath her impulsive temperament Madame Quinet hid the soul of a stoic. She had such an elevated conception of life and its duties, and such a conscientious determination to fulfil them, that rather than arrest the development of any noble trait of character in her son, she would willingly jeopardise his life, showing always, and consistently, how far she esteemed the soul above the body. Sometimes, indeed, she appeared almost reckless about him, but it was not so, for he was never out of her thoughts. Her one absorbing idea was how to make a man of him after her own heart. On the other hand, his faith in his mother's power and goodness knew no bounds. Having heard how true penitents mixed their bread with cinders, the child one day tried to make a cake of ash-dust. A puff of wind blew some of the fine, sharp powder into his eyes. His mother, hearing his screams, ran to his relief. Edgar thought he was blinded, and in a piteous voice exclaimed: "If my eyes are put out, will you know how to make me new ones?"

Gifted with singular purity of heart, great moral delicacy, much sensibility, and with a never-failing goodness that harmonised all his faculties, the aureole was so manifest in infancy that an English uncle exclaimed, the first time the child was shown him, "He resembles Marcus Aurelius." "A delicate child, very affectionate, but very roguish," such was the testimony of the nurse of these early days, *la bonne Madeleine*, who lived to be the first to welcome Edgar Quinet to Brussels, when, forty-two years later, he came there an exile.

In 1806 Madame Quinet took her son, then three years of age, to Paris, from whence they set out for Wesel, to join M. Quinet, who was acting as Commissioner of the Army of the Rhine. At Wesel Edgar was allowed to be continually with the soldiers. Austerlitz had been fought in the previous December, and some

of the cavalry who had been in the battle were at Wesel. They petted Edgar, would have him at mess, making him drink their soup. When they marched he accompanied them, with two large sheep, harnessed like horses. When they returned he went with the regiment to the stables, and combed and curried his sheep as he saw the soldiers did the horses. No doubt his parents argued that French boys were only born to be conscripts, and Edgar could not begin too early.

CHAPTER II.

CERTINES, CHAROLLES. 1807–1811.

"She is in love with the immortal part of me."—PLINY'S *Letters.*

AT the commencement of 1807 the boy and his mother returned to France, and went at once to Certines, a country place about six or seven miles from Bourg, his father possessing a small estate there, which had been in the family three hundred years.

Certines was one of those out-of-the-world spots, rarer and rarer every day, but which in the early part of this century were not uncommon even in England. The sun set behind vast oak forests, so illimitable that people got lost in them for days; it rose over a ridge of mountains, the first step in the mighty ranges of the Jura and of the Alps. Between the forests and the mountains lay heaths, copses, alder woods, vast plains of grass or of corn; over this immense ocean of broom, of heath, of rye, the sultry summer air hung silent and peaceful, while in the autumn, from the marshes and the dark pools in the forest arose miasmas, bringing fever into every cottage and homestead. On a little hill in this vast waving ocean stood the ancestral home of the Quinets, half cottage, half chateau, in the midst of acacias and poplars, and of pear, nut, and cherry trees, the latter pushing their long branches right into its windows. The building was very old, and Jerome Quinet had ornamented it with two semi-circular summer houses, with slate roofs and columns.

Here his family lived a rural life, and the little Edgar received a natural and, for that very reason, a singular education. In the early summer time the boy rose with the dawn, shouldered his little hay-fork, and went to the meadows with the mowers. In harvest time he gleaned after the reapers, made a sheaf, beat out the corn with a little flail, took it to the miller, fetched the flour when ground, and making it into cakes, baked them in an oven he had built himself.

Although his mother believed in the great advantage of being well born, she was far too enlightened to imagine its benefit consisted in being able to separate oneself from the common herd. On the contrary, she had faith in the inherent dignity of Humanity, and conceived nothing could be better than to live in continual contact with it, especially under its most unsophisticated form. Besides, she had herself drunk at the fountainhead of the new democratic ideas, and no doubt thought that as her son had to find a career amongst the people, the sooner he understood them the better. His experiences were simple, but they revealed in primitive and childlike language the main idea that most entertain as to the only possible basis of society—the rule of the strongest.

Edgar had for his playmate a peasant boy named Gustin, three or four years older than himself, but very much stronger. Gustin thought it quite natural that he should always give in to the young gentleman's whims, and act the part of a little slave. Calling the two boys before her, Madame Quinet reproved the one for his servility, and the other for his insolence, telling them that they were equals, and that she expected them to act as such in future. The young peasant understood that there was to be a change, and that birth was no longer to have the rule, but the idea of equality between a boy of five or six and one of eight or nine was more than he could comprehend. So in his turn he played

the tyrant, and Edgar had submissively to carry Gustin's sabots when the latter was tired of running about in them. Gustin, however, was one of the kindest boys in the village, and in his society Edgar not only learnt to love human nature, but to love all nature. Thus he came to know the birds by their notes, or by their manner of perching on the hedges, or on the trees, and to distinguish the many voices of nature.

When about three years of age, Edgar wanted to be a ploughman. He was accordingly allowed to lead, day after day, two oxen up and down the furrows. For these patient creatures he had as great an affection as they had for him. He considered them as his own, and could not bear that any one else should drive them; and when tired or melancholy, a condition into which a child might easily fall in such a languid atmosphere, a visit to the stable of Bise and Froment proved an unfailing remedy. In their society the boy's spirits returned, and he felt quite consoled by the sympathetic way in which they looked at him with their large tender eyes.

Every winter was spent in Bourg, and then, his father disliking the noise of children, he was sent to school. His first master was a learned man, a professor of mathematics. He was kind enough to his little pupil, but very hard upon his own son, whom he wished to make as good a mathematician as himself.

Edgar could not have been above six years old when he came under this master, and it was he who taught him to write and to read. For, to his mother's serious alarm, the usual order of these accomplishments was reversed in his case. This was no doubt due to the method of instruction. Taking him into the garden, his master would make him draw letters on the sand, or if that could not be done, he would show him how to trace them on a blackboard. The result was, that he could not only write before he could read, but could make a

pen out of almost anything, as the following letter, the earliest that has been preserved, testifies:—

"A Jasseron, le 22 Octobre (1808).

"MA BONNE MAMAN,—*Presque toujours* on dit que je suis bien sage. Je m'amuse bien et je pense à toi toujours. Je serai bien content de te voir. C'est Virrieu qui m'a donné le papier, les plumes et l'encre. Je voulais bien t'écrire ce matin, mais je n'avais pas pu parce que je n'avais que des allumettes pour plumes. EDGAR, ton fils et ton ami."

Directly he could read his master commenced Latin with him, but just as he had got his little pupil into the verbs the unfortunate mathematician was seized with a sudden fit of madness in the presence of Madame Quinet. In fact, the poor man tried to strike her, and was only prevented by a gentleman coming in, who took him home. These two religiously kept the matter a secret, but Edgar was removed, and allowed, to his great chagrin, to believe that he had in some way offended his good master.

His next teacher was an old captain in the dragoons, and the schoolhouse—an ancient convent, used as a place for storing forage for the passing troops. When a room could be found a class was held, but the teacher spent the time in going over his cavalry manœuvres, using the boys' primers to represent the columns in platoons.

When the convent finally became inaccessible for such purposes, he was sent to pick up a little knowledge from a priest who had got married, and who had been nearly starved in consequence. This teacher was so ignorant that Edgar learnt nothing from him; but as a set-off against this poor schooling, he had a music master. This worthy had been a chorister in youth, but now his round, bistre-coloured face was furrowed with age. He was a universal genius, music being the least of his cares. A great inventor, a great politician, he was the first to enlighten the future historian about feudal rights, tithes, and forced labour, as they existed before the

Revolution. He taught him the "Marseillaise," which everybody else had then forgotten. This was the first piece of music Edgar Quinet ever learnt. If from these odd schoolmasters he obtained little ordinary knowledge, he picked up from them facts or notions which in after-days he turned to account.

His real teacher in these days was his mother, and from her he was daily imbibing thoughts and ideas which coloured his whole life. When at home he was constantly with her, when away they kept up continual correspondence; she always playing the part of the serious, earnest mother, ever searching out his faults, and urging him to overcome them for her sake. She treated him when only a small child as her confidant and intimate friend. She read Shakespeare, Racine, and Madame de Staël to him. When he came home from the plough she would sometimes appear on the gallery and, assuming the air of a tragedy-queen, begin to recite Racine's "Athalie," expecting him to take up the *rôle* of Joas. At seven years of age he was thus acquainted with Hamlet and Macbeth, and not only with the dramas of Racine, but with those of Corneille and Voltaire. Madame Quinet shrunk instinctively from Rousseau, and had no sympathy whatever for Chateaubriand, but for Voltaire she entertained an unbounded admiration. His was the first name Edgar could recollect hearing. When he asked his mother who was the cleverest man in the world, she replied, "An old gentleman called Voltaire." He thought that this old gentleman lived in the town, and that it was very strange that he never came to see them; however, he supposed it must be because he was so very old. It so happened that though he was born and lived for ten years under the Empire, he heard the name of Voltaire long before he knew that of Napoleon. Voltaire and Madame de Staël were Madame Quinet's literary idols, and she must have deeply resented the exile of the latter, for Edgar always

remembered it as the first thing that ever troubled him.

But his mother's work would not have been what it was had she only influenced his mind. It was the ardour of her soul that really embraced him and enabled her to hold him, so to speak, close to her heart as long as she lived. Sometimes, when they wandered alone in the garden at Certines, she would stop and pour out her soul in audible prayer. These prayers were often eloquent, always different, and full of feeling. But though so truly pious in thought and action, she taught him nothing special in the way of Christian doctrine. That he had a Father in heaven who cared for him, and who would listen to his prayers for wisdom, was the sum of all her dogmatical teaching. On one of these occasions she told him that now he was seven years of age he was responsible, and would have to answer for his own faults. For several days he kept close watch upon himself, but at last he was naughty. He was in despair; nothing would console him. All day long he walked up and down the outer gallery, crying in a lamentable voice, *Je suis damné, je suis damné.*

The atmosphere at Certines was unhealthy. Fever prevailed so constantly that its dread was even upon the children. The first time Edgar saw a butterfly crawling on the ground and fluttering its wings, he thought it had the fever. The time came when he was stricken himself. Nine or ten children had already died, some even in the Quinet household. As he lay in a sort of lethargy, a companion came, looked at him, and said, "He is not for long." However, the care of his mother and nurse were rewarded, for he woke at last out of his deadly slumber. In their delight they both sprang on the chairs and sung for joy. Everything and everybody welcomed him back to life; even his grandmother, terrible to every one else, actually smiled at him, and looked quite charming.

Though a Protestant, Madame Quinet went on Sundays to the little Catholic Church at Certines, where an old Trappist officiated, named Father Pichon. Poor man! he had fallen on an unbelieving age, so that his only consolation in the general neglect was the consideration shown him by his Protestant parishioner; in fact, he used to go the length of publicly pointing her out as an example to his flock. This humble village church, with its cross and chalice of wood and its bare unadorned walls, seemed to Madame Quinet to recall the primitive days of Christianity.

In the autumn of 1811 they went to live at Charolles, a little town in the department of *Sâone-et-Loire*, the centre of the district from whence come the breed of cattle called *Charollais*, well known in the markets of Paris and Lyons.

Suddenly the gentle culture of Certines was arrested, and the boy was thrown into the society of Charollais cattle-folk, soldiers, and prisoners of war. Very soon he became abrupt in manner and quite a tease.

CHAPTER III.

BOURG. 1811–1815.

"They are coming—they are coming—they are taking everything—there is no one to help us—we are lost."—*L'Invasion.*

THE republicanism of the Quinets was so thorough that they could never bear to speak of the man who had dared to chain the free-will of France. Though all the world now swore by the fortune of Cæsar, the name of Napoleon was not allowed to pollute their home. Thus it was that one little French boy living at the very time of Austerlitz and Jena, and quick enough to catch up knowledge, was some years old before he heard the name that was on every tongue in Europe. This reticence, where in every other matter there was so much freedom, proved a great mistake, for Edgar was left to learn about the Emperor from popular sources, and so learnt to admire the man his father abominated.

It was hardly possible for any French boy to escape from the military fever which then raged in France. Regiments were continually passing through the town for the frontier, and during their stay some of the soldiers were billeted on the Quinets. To Edgar they all appeared heroes, but there was one especially who won his admiration—a bronzed soldier, who had been taken prisoner in the Spanish war, and had been confined on the isle of Cabréra, a mere rock under a burning sun, sometimes without water and without anything to eat. To while away those dreary days the corporal had amused himself by tattooing his arms. Nothing would do but Edgar must

be tattooed as well, and the child of these stern republicans bore in his own flesh the symbol they so much detested—a violet eagle.

However, his mother did not entirely leave him to pick up his political opinions in the stables and in the streets. Later on she tried to read to him a book called "Considérations sur la Révolution Française," but the language of liberty had so completely fallen into oblivion that she might as well have read Hebrew or Greek to him. So she gave up the attempt, and he became more and more filled with militarism; for soldiers were ever passing before his eyes, either as heroes going to the war, or as prisoners going to be interned, or as local levies raised for the defence of the country, or as invaders coming after the final overthrow. Thus the spirit of soldiering took possession of him, as it did of all his companions. Mimic war was their one sport. In these battles Edgar constantly took part, getting severely hurt. It was a brutalising experience, and would have made a young savage of him had he not through it all been watched over by a mother, who nourished his heart and mind with elevated thoughts. One day a long column of wretched, half-starved, ragged soldiers came into Bourg. They were Spanish prisoners, with bloodshot eyes and tottering limbs. Some of these poor skeletons begged alms of Madame Quinet. She threw them her purse, and ran weeping into the house. Over and over again she would say to Edgar, "They may conquer Spain, but never the Spaniards." It was Edgar's first lesson in the rights of other nations. His poem "Saragossa" shows how this incident was burnt into his soul.

His mother's dislike to speak of anything that concerned Napoleon was so great, that he who was to become in after-years an encyclopædia of historical knowledge was nearly twelve years of age before he had almost heard of the great events in the midst of which he was living. From the almanac of the fair he first came to

know of the battle of Leipsic, and the death of Poniatowski. A boy of his own age was the first to tell him of the burning of Moscow, as they sat together perched on some logs in a cart returning from the woods. But it made no more impression on him than the history of Montezuma. These events seemed so far off as to appear fabulous.

It was not until one morning in the winter of 1814 that their real importance began to dawn upon him. Going out, he met, returning into the town, a half-witted fellow who carried parcels for the people of Bourg. With hat despoiled of its wonted ornaments, tricoloured ribbons and Easter daisies, and without the oak branch he was in the habit of waving to and fro as a sign of victory, the poor carrier was hurrying along, crying, "Bad news! the 'Kaiserlicks' are not far off!"

The whole town seemed in commotion. On the square Edgar found about thirty citizens collected, and their officer dealing out cartouches to them. The last man in the file was his quondam schoolmaster, the dragoon captain, who was brandishing his sword. Returning home he found his father casting bullets. Nor was this all, for ere long came marching into the town a regiment of boys, about fifteen years old, raised by an absurd nobleman, and commanded by a terrible-looking captain. Edgar's parents took alarm, and knowing his excitable character and love for soldiering, imprisoned him for a couple of days. When he got his liberty, he saw, to his amazement, the armed citizens come back and quietly disband, and the juvenile warriors march out at the wrong gate.

Then the defence of the town was left to a hundred Piedmontese, who, brave enough, went out like the rest, sent a shot at the enemy for honour's sake, and then, seeing they were innumerable, returned and followed in the wake of the boys. The Piedmontese gone, even children, ignorant as this little Quinet, began to realise

the situation. The invaders were upon them, and they were helpless. Edgar felt as if the end of the world had come.

However, a strange fascination led him to go to the highroad where the fight had taken place, and to watch for the appearance of these terrible "Kaiserlicks." Not a single person was to be seen, but on walking to a rise in the road, he saw an interminable file of horse-soldiers stretching to the very limits of the horizon. They came slowly on in silence, the two ranks apart on either side of the road. As there was nothing menacing about them, he waited until they were close upon the town before he went to tell his mother.

Ere long the Austrians were in Bourg. Madame Quinet and her son watched them defiling under their windows, she weeping at the ignominy of France, he, catching instinctively her sentiment, feeling as if his heart would break.

Four horse-soldiers were quartered on them. They proved to be Hungarians, and spoke to Edgar in Latin. To the boy's astonishment he not only found that he could understand them, but was able to forage up a few words in reply. Then he believed for the first time that the ancients really did talk Latin. Communication established, the barbarians, as the boy thought them, could do nothing without him. Nobody else dared to approach them, and his father was too proud or too deeply chagrined to do so. At last, one of them fancying that he was cheated by a man who wanted to sell him a pipe, got angry and threatened his young interpreter. "Te verberabo," he shouted to him. Edgar's pride was touched, and not another Latin word would he utter, although they coaxed and flattered him. "Te verberabo" had changed everything! Flying from them, and from the hosts of foreign soldiers who passed through the town, he sullenly took refuge in his boat at the end of the garden.



"They came slowly on in silence.

To face p. 18.

Here, with some of his young companions, he passed his time fishing, and on one occasion was very nearly drowned. Forbidden in consequence to go on the river, the spirit of mischief took him again among the town boys, who, left at this time of public calamity very much to their own devices, spent their days in playing at war, dividing into parties, besieging and being besieged. The game grew too real, and Edgar had his arm broken.

While he was laid up he read a tale of knight-errantry —"Les Quatre Fils d'Aymon." This gave him his first ideas about the Middle Ages.

The troubles into which he thus fell were partly due to the absence of his mother in Paris. She had there witnessed the return of the Bourbons, and had been touched by the dignity of Louis XVIII. But Edgar felt no kind of interest in what she told him; he had of late lived so much among the people that he called the king, as they did, "Roi Cotillon," a mere old woman.

A favourite amusement with the little Bonapartists in Bourg was to go into the depths of the neighbouring forests, and there to find the whitened skeleton of some horse that the wolves had devoured, and dragging it into the neighbourhood of the town, to set it up when evening came in front of the door of a royalist neighbour. Next morning the mischievous crew were up early, lurking in some hiding-place, waiting to enjoy the enemy's astonishment when he opened his door.

CHAPTER IV.

BOURG. 1815.

"As for this young Ali, one cannot but like him, a noble-minded creature, as he shows himself now and always afterwards, full of affection and fiery daring."
—*Heroes and Hero-worship.*

ONE day there was a party at Charolles. The guests were playing at cards. A traveller arrived from Bourg.

"Have you heard the news?" he exclaimed. "The Emperor has come back from Elba!"

Hitherto Edgar had been Bonapartist because the empire had represented to his imagination France in uniform and fighting, now he began to get a distinct idea of a great figure coming out of the pell-mell of war—Napoleon. That figure became his ideal hero. Napoleon had landed in France, alone; how tremendous the dangers he had dared to face! Every morning the boy looked anxiously for news. Was his hero conquered or conqueror? Many persons said he was already a prisoner, some even spoke of an iron cage. For twelve days Edgar endured a series of hopes and fears, of shocks and transports, all the more trying because he could not share them with his mother. The memory of that fortnight remained indelibly impressed on his mind; he wondered that he ever survived it.

An officer was billeted at his father's house. He would neither eat nor drink, and seemed in despair. At last Edgar heard him reveal the cause. He had taken an oath to the Bourbons, but now the Emperor had

returned he felt certain that his regiment would desert in a body. The crisis had come, for at Bourg the roads parted; how would he be able to prevent his soldiers going off in the direction in which Napoleon was marching? Edgar listened, he was sorry for the officer, but delighted at the thought that so fine a regiment should go to swell the ranks of the Imperial army. Next morning, however, he saw it march in the opposite direction; he followed, wearing a tricoloured cockade, in which was hidden a bunch of violets. He went after the soldiers until they were out of sight, but ere long the regiment reappeared again, returning without its officers. He waited, and directly the serjeant-major, who was now in command, saw him, he cried out—

"Youngster, give me your cockade."

Edgar was only too delighted, and was allowed in recompense to march into the town at the head of the troops by the side of the serjeant.

With a tricoloured flag which a young lady had made, Edgar and his companions went about the woods, the fields, and over the heaths, singing patriotic songs. When they came to a village they struck up a new song of Béranger which they had just learnt—

"Il faut partir, Agnès l'ordonne,
Adieu plaisir, adieu repos!"

The boys were terrifically in earnest, but no one else was. To their surprise not a peasant left his plough, nor a shepherd his flock, to follow their standard.

Wandering about the woods in this slightly demented state, the boy came upon a dreadful sight. In a little copse, among the primroses and violets, lay the dead body of a soldier who had been shot in the back; his mouth was wide open, his arms, tattooed with eagles, were stretched out, while a long trace of congealed blood marked the distance of the place where the ball had entered his body. The man was evidently a deserter,

probably he had thought that the little wood presented a favourable opportunity to quit the white flag in order that he might rejoin the Emperor.

What! an old soldier thus to perish ignominiously! For weeks after that bloodstained corpse haunted Edgar. In the middle of the night he would wake, and there by his bedside stood the figure, red and lurid, as if crying for help. Afraid that his father would laugh at him if he said that he had been frightened by a ghost, he dared not cry out, but sat up in bed, his mouth open with terror. Again and again the spectre returned, until one night the boy threw off the clothes, groped his way out of the room, and went downstairs. He returned, and putting his hand on the banister saw the bleeding soldier move on before him. In horror he rushed along a narrow passage, fancying that he felt the spectre's hot breath over his shoulder. He ran into a servant's room, closed the door, and rushing up to the bed, cried out, "The soldier! the soldier!" The servant awoke and tried to pacify him, but even then the awful figure did not at once disappear.

Up to this time the boy had never read a newspaper; in fact, he had only seen one now and then by chance. What was more, he did not understand that it was a vehicle of news. He saw a retired captain every morning read to a silent group what he called "the papers," but to Edgar the word conveyed no meaning. All the news he believed in came by word of mouth, the living word, handed on from village to village, from man to man. Thus he heard of Waterloo. Forty-two years later, a hundred leagues away, he heard the story repeated in the identical terms in which it had reached him when a boy, and in which he had heard it again and again in other lands. The popular legend about Waterloo which thus obtained currency in France on the morrow of the battle, and maintained so persistent existence, ran thus :—

"The Emperor's aide-de-camp, mounted on the top of a hill, says, 'Sire, I see an innumerable army of Prussians!' Napoleon goes to the top, and looks through his telescope. 'No,' says he, 'you are wrong, they are our own people, that is Grouchy. You are nervous, you make a mistake.'

"'Sire,' replies the aide-de-camp, 'I tell you it is an army of Prussians.'

"'Then,' says the Emperor, 'we are lost, we are betrayed!'"

Betrayed! Treason! this was the popular explanation of Waterloo. But, however it had come to pass, the fact that France and her Emperor were finally defeated was soon brought home to every eye and heart in Bourg. Disbanded soldiers in all sorts of uniforms, horse-soldiers, and lancers on foot, mixed up with infantry, carrying sticks instead of arms, were seen passing through the town, each finding his way back as best he could to his own village. *Treason!* was their explanation when interrogated, and the thought struck panic into people's hearts, two hundred leagues away from the battlefield.

This rabble-rout of a broken-down army was followed by hordes of foreign invaders, and now there was even less good feeling than before. The invaders were more savage—the invaded more sullen.

Monsieur Quinet shut himself up in his study. He was a great physicist, and had undertaken a stupendous work on the theory of terrestrial magnetism, which he had already identified with the principle of electricity. While his house was invaded by all kinds of foreigners, while the Tyrolese were beating their drums and the Hungarians blowing their trumpets at his very door, he sat absorbed in abstruse calculations. His wife, on the other hand, tried to forget her chagrin in reading Tasso, Ariosto, or Shakespeare, her son sitting at her side, following his mother as far as he was able into the enchanted land of poesy. But at best this was only an exercise of the imagination; his first real glimpse of a world, a hidden world of celestial harmony and beauty, came

through the sense of sound. He had learnt to play the violin, and was so passionately fond of it that he was scraping away at it from morning till night. He sat up in bed with his fiddle-stick in his hand, he jumped up before he was dressed and tortured everybody's ears in his efforts to make the instrument talk to him.

One morning in September 1815 he was thus engaged, standing in his night-shirt at the end of his bed, when suddenly the door opened, and in stalked a great Croatian hussar. Before he could remonstrate the tall soldier had seized the violin, had got it into position, and was scraping on it himself. Edgar's arms had gone out automatically after the rapt violin, they continued extended in sheer astonishment at the wonderful manner in which this strange intruder was playing. Such melodies, such ravishing strains, had never fallen on his ear before. He stood entranced.

Meanwhile his mother, lying awake in a neighbouring room, noted the strange change, and marvelled what had come to Edgar, he seemed inspired. Moved to verify the miracle, she sprang out of bed, and ran undressed to his room. A domestic, smitten with the same notion, had followed her mistress, and the two women opened the door. Edgar saw them, and the three looked mutually horror-struck at the *contretemps*. Happily the Croat stood, violin in hand, with his back to the door, so that they had time to rush away before he perceived the increase in his audience. In a few minutes after, without uttering a word, the invader replaced the fiddle in Edgar's hands and stalked out of the room. He never knew the admiration and amusement his passion for music had evoked.

Edgar had two friends, Leon and Charles Bruys, who also learnt to play the violin. One day Charles played a piece so badly that Madame Bruys stopped him and asked Edgar to play it. But he obstinately refused. His

mother scolded and he looked cross, until at last, finding no entreaties would prevail, the elders shrugged their shoulders and gave it up. When they were alone his mother began to upbraid him. "Didn't you see," he said, "that Charles had played badly, and that if I had tried the same piece his father and mother and grandfather would have thought that I played better than he did." Some days after, being alone in his room, Madame Bruys overheard him playing this very piece. "I see how it was Edgar would not play that piece the other day," and she ran into the room, and embracing him, told him. He became very red, struggled to get away, and ran out of the room.

Like all who are afflicted with thoughts profounder than their age warrants, Edgar was no doubt more reticent than he ever imagined. Sensitive of ridicule, he said nothing to his elders of that which he could neither explain nor defend. Whether even his mother had any idea that a little hot-brained Bonapartist lived so near her heart, does not appear. If his parents knew anything about it, they were wonderfully wise people neither to try to argue nor to laugh him out of it. All they did was to sow in his heart a love of liberty, belief in the dignity of human nature, leaving it to the future to teach him what to preserve or to reject.

It was not long before this method of education bore fruit. He adored what the world around him adored, but every day there grew up stronger and stronger within him a feeling of aversion to the mental tendencies hidden under all he idolised. Somehow or other everything he heard outside his own home troubled him. A hatred of thought had sprung up, an excessive reaction in favour of the principle of authority. People seemed to take a delight in appearing stupid, and in snubbing those who still pretended to think for themselves. If Edgar uttered sentiments such as he had heard at home, he was answered by a sardonic, "I don't understand you."

If he spoke of books which to him were as familiar as household words, it was ever the same parrot-like reply, "I don't understand you." This fashion of despising all that did not appear armed with some visible force oppressed him.[1] He began to feel a desire for solitude. A short distance from Bourg was a hill surrounded by firs. Here he took his books, read aloud his favourite authors, and comforted himself with the thought that, if men would not understand them, Nature could.

His surprise and distress at the want of mental sympathy he experienced were intensified by the discovery that the world had changed its opinions as it were in one night. Everyone had been for Napoleon, now his name was not only despised, but forgotten. All who were still suspected of Bonapartism, or who had shown special enmity to the old *régime*, were proscribed. His schoolmaster, the old dragoon captain, had to fly; an old Conventionnel, a friend of his parents and the father of one of his companions, was put in prison. This fickleness of mankind deeply impressed him, but his little world was frightened by "the White Terror." Henceforth he could never throw off a certain anxiety that nothing would remain long as it was.

The portrait here given of him when a boy accords very well with this period in his life. An oval face, and the most dreamy eyes, strangely dreamy for a boy, are its characteristic features. The head is said to be too long as a matter of fact, and the little old mannish, high-collared coat, with the grieved expression amounting almost to sulkiness, convey an impression which does not do him justice. Nevertheless, it is most precious as giving the only idea of him in early life.

[1] These characteristics of the time were due to its militarism. Madame de Rémusat says, that having once entered into a conversation with the First Consul about Shakespeare, she felt obliged to keep silence for several days after, or at least only to take part in idle talk, in order to efface the sensation she had produced among the silent and attentive audience in epaulettes. *Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 18.

To return to his history; he gratified his opposition to the world by an act which might have got him into serious trouble, had he not been the son of a man known to have always hated Bonaparte. Charolles was to illuminate in honour of the fall of the Empire and the return of the Bourbons. Going out into the streets, Edgar saw his father's house sparkling like the rest. In an instant he ran in, rushed up the staircase, opened the windows, and extinguished the lights, throwing the lamps on to the floor and kicking them to pieces. The result was that the brilliant street was cut in half by a great patch of black. Shortly after the king's *procureur* passed, and inquiring the meaning of this hiatus in the illuminations, learnt that it was caused by young Quinet. The same evening he met Monsieur Quinet at a party at the sub-prefect's, and told him of his son's audacity. But not a word of reproof did Edgar receive.

Nevertheless, this adventure probably had something to do with the determination his father took about this time to change the method of his education. It was decided he should enter the college at Bourg. Now indeed did Edgar feel one with his hero. He too was going, a prisoner to his St. Helena. Like the great eagle, the young lark was henceforth to live in a narrow cage. He acted as one about to retire from the world. He bade adieu to his young friends, distributing among them all his treasures. To one he gave his magpie, to another his rabbits, and to a third his lame raven. His sparrow-hawk, who had remained faithful to him through every change, now rose in the air, and, poising itself for a moment high above its master's head, uttered a wild warning cry, and fled back again to freedom.

CHAPTER V.

BOURG, CERTINES. 1815–1817.

"This moment is unique. It has not returned, it will not return. It was at once to eclipse all others, and to illuminate them with the true Light."—*Mes Idées.*

In the College of Bourg, it seems to have been thought that the only way to keep the boys from doing wrong was to imprison them within its walls, and never to permit their egress except under guardianship. To one who had breathed nothing but the free air of liberty since he was born, such chains were doubly galling.

Between school-hours Edgar used to go to the top of an old rampart in the outworks of the college, and standing there, look sadly out towards the edge of the forest. He often was tempted to run away, but the thought of his mother stopped him.

The plan of teaching was unendurable. He felt no interest in dry mechanical learning, of which he could not imagine the object. However, that principle of duty which from his earliest years had been implanted in his soul came to his aid, and he tried to conquer his dislike. But it only increased his discontent, for he felt his efforts were but those of a slave.

Thanks to his industry, and the early instruction which he had received in Latin, he found himself the classmate of young men of eighteen or nineteen years, he being only twelve. They appeared to him a set of young coxcombs, thinking only of their dress. He

Bourg 14 mars

Ta lettre, ma chère maman, m'a fait un bien grand plaisir, d'autant plus que tu me dis que tu es contente de mes lettres, que je sens heureux lorsque tu es contente de moi; j'espère aussi tout ce que je peux pour pouvoir te plaire, et j'espère qu'à l'avenir j'y réussirai en quelque sorte.

J'avais déjà porté la note à Pierrette lorsque tu m'as écrit, elle m'a dit qu'elle avait reçu ta lettre elle a été bien bonne pour moi elle m'a fait exprès d'excellents gaufres. Le bon Mr P. m'a demandé si j'avais de l'argent avant que je lui donne la note, il m'en a beaucoup donné. Je suis bien reconnaissant de la peine que tu prends de me faire des bas toi même.

Dis-moi s. t. p. si Charles ne porte pas mieux et si Claudie n'est point malade.

Mr Paris est-il parti pour Paris? On a fait hier ici beaucoup d'arrestations je ne

Sais pas pourquoi. On a
arrêté Deux Cibels. Mr Rodet
Didier et Gillon et beaucoup d'autres sont obligés de
quitter le département.

Je vais au catéchisme
que j'étudie le mieux que je
peux, et nous devons faire notre
première communion dans un mois.

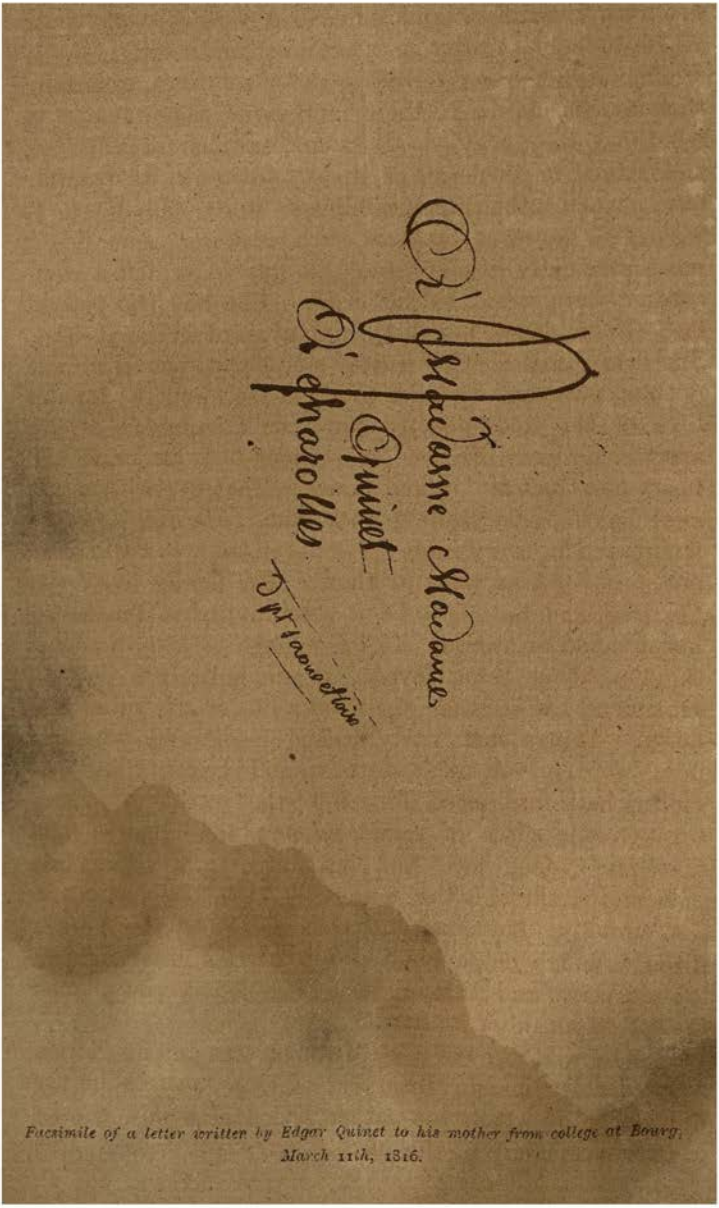
Le pauvre Mr Perrat
doit être bien triste, dit-moi
où il est et s'il est à Chanelles
je le conjure de lui donner un
moins une fois à dîner pour lui
remonter un peu et lui montrer
que Dieu ne l'abandonne pas
quoi qu'il est malheureux.

presente-lui si Ce plait mes respects.

Adieu ma chère maman
Embrasse Blanche pour moi et
Emarcie si te plait ta bonne
petite pipine qui se prive d'un
ornement pour quelquun qui fut
un jour son persécuteur mais qui
ne le sera plus.

Adieu encore une fois ma
bien bonne maman.

Edgar quinet



Facsimile of a letter written by Edgar Quinet to his mother from college at Bourg, March 11th, 1816.

fell into moodiness and silence, a misanthropic state which brought sterility into his mind and heart.

The boys never referred to their relatives, especially their female ones. If their mother or sisters came to see them, they avoided all demonstrations of affection, and talked to them at as great a distance as possible from where their schoolfellows were playing. It happened, however, on one such occasion, that Edgar was sufficiently near to see the way in which a companion was greeted by his sister. She had the typical face of an angel, fair hair, and eyes of celestial blue. She was dressed with rustic simplicity, but that was nothing; the smile of her innocent face, and the tone of love in her voice, affected him like a summer's zephyr after cold sleet. His sullen humour fled, his mind and heart burst out in joy and praise. That sweet form was ever by his side smiling upon him. He saw it everywhere and in everything. He never knew her Christian name, nor did he want to know. The family lived near Certines, and he might have been invited to the house, but he had no desire. It was enough to love, he never thought about being loved. It was entirely a poetical sentiment, the bursting again into life of his mind and heart. Things that lately looked black and wretched now wore an air of sweetness and beauty. As the violin had introduced him into the world of poetry through the sense of sound, so now the apparition of that fair young face had introduced him again into that world through the sense of form. The violin and the smile of Mademoiselle Genevier were the portals through which he caught glimpses of the inner light of the universe, and through which he felt a vibration of the far-off music of its harmonies.

But he was to have a still deeper sense of its glories a momentary insight into one of those secrets in the knowledge of which his father had said would consist the eternal felicity of the just.

The Easter of 1816 arrived, and his confessor was surprised to learn that he had never made his first communion. Living in such matters above mere fashion, Madame Quinet had wished to put off this solemn season until she thought that her son was capable of understanding its significance. The priest, on the contrary, thought that not a moment should be lost, seeing that he was thirteen years of age. So they set about preparing him, a task which proved very easy, thanks to his mother's influence and the gentleness of his director, an eloquent Provençal missionary.

This good man understood him. He saw that his reserved nature was longing for sympathy, above all for infinite sympathy. He saw, too, how he had been educated, and wisely avoiding every controverted point, he spoke only of the common truths of the Gospel. Yet because he was not quite courageous enough to throw overboard all his clerical formulas, he fell into a grave error, and in the confessional almost spoilt the good he was permitted to do. Happily his penitent did not understand what he meant; Edgar was, in fact, too much moved by higher thoughts to notice anything of the kind. He was living above all earthly things, and felt very happy. All through this time of preparation he was in constant communication with his Protestant mother, who assisted him throughout with prayers and exhortations. She told him to look gently on the infirmities of the Roman Church, to pierce the earthly veil and the corruptions of time, and to fix his gaze on Eternal Truth.

Thus he went to the altar, supported on the one side by his Protestant mother, and on the other by a Roman Catholic missionary. As he knelt in the Church of Notre Dame de St. Nicholas de Bourg, admitted for the first time into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church, he, a mere boy, realised in himself the unity of Christendom, for he mingled his Protestant and Catholic

prayers together, and trying to preserve a relation to both churches, he felt most filled with the one he could not see: the persecuted, despised church of his mother.

After the communion the missionary preached a sermon, which to Edgar proved a real word of God. When it was needful for him to rise and make the round of the church he could scarcely stand for emotion. His eyes were blinded with tears, not of sorrow but of joy. That moment never returned, nor did he expect it ever would. Often in after-years he experienced religious emotions, but they had a literary and intellectual character. This excelled them all, and illuminated them all with a ray of the True Light.

From the joy of this unique hour he passed into the wilderness of trial and temptation. The escape from Elba, the march to Paris, Waterloo, and the Invasion, the sudden realisation of the Napoleonic Epos, had been, to his young mind, like the steaming manure by means of which the gardener antedates a season, but which, bringing some plants to precocious perfection, only develops in others the worst qualities. From early childhood Edgar Quinet so breathed the atmosphere of militarism, that every sense had been filled with it; but when that sudden and marvellous apparition of the Hero of the Hundred days flashed before his eyes, he was suddenly changed from a mere day-fly, rejoicing in the scorching sunshine, into a conscious idolater of its centre and source.

But under the Restoration the French world utterly forgot the Emperor. Even his portrait was proscribed, so that his very form was unknown. Thus it came to pass that those who had merged their whole existence in the glory of Napoleon, felt they must live at war with all around, or change their entire nature. The first effect, as we have seen, in Edgar was misanthropy. Under its influence he had entered the college at Bourg, but there in that apparently gloomy spot he had seen the aurora;

the clouds had lifted, one rift after another of golden light had opened to him, and a distance had appeared where the sun shone with eternal glory. But the clouds closed again, and he had many a weary mile to trudge before he reached the daylight.

The glamour of the false light withdrawn, the love of liberty, the dignity of human nature, the claims of duty—all these ideas, planted so early in his mind, gained more and more power over him. The writings of Madame de Staël aroused his conscience to a sense of the servitude of the Napoleonic *régime*. However, he did not readily give up his hero, but rather sought to conciliate his religious admiration of Napoleon with his belief in liberal ideas. He eagerly welcomed the report of the deathbed conversion of the exile of St. Helena to the principles of liberty, and imagined that the defeated tyrant had admitted at last the ideas he had used his colossal power to tread under foot. But when he came to compare his ideal Napoleon with the popular one, he realised the immense change that had taken place in his own mind. The discovery distressed him, but he found that moral advance is only possible to those who are not afraid to differ from public opinion.

A deeper tendency lay at the roots of his nature, one not so much the result of the atmosphere which he had breathed, as inborn. We have noted how the admiration of beauty was the one agreeable feature in the character of his paternal grandmother, and it is not strange therefore to find it come out in equal intensity in her grandson. The question was, should it be his master or his servant? It took him three years to settle the question, and then he did not deliver himself.

In the neighbourhood of Certines lived a brother and two sisters, nearly allied to Bonaparte. Although so highly connected, they were in narrow circumstances, and on friendly terms with the Quinet family. Edgar paid them a visit. He found them concluding a meal, and as he

entered, the young ladies rose to remove an immense rye-loaf, almost too heavy for them to carry. He came forward to assist them, and as he did so his eyes met those of the youngest, and he fell conquered at the first glance.

She had the bust and mien of an antique statue: a Roman profile, a rather low brow, with clusters of jet-black hair, dressed and bound like sculptured tresses, eyes motionless but sparkling under their dark lashes, a neck swan-like, a Southern complexion—altogether the dazzling look of an Agrippina. Edgar felt as if another soul than his own had mastered him and was going to lead him wherever it pleased. He struggled, he groaned, he reasoned with himself, he tried every artifice he could think of; do what he would he could not get rid of the intruder. By a sure presentiment he knew that he should never find behind this finely-chiselled form a heart to answer to his own. And yet the fascination of her beauty held him enchained in more than iron bonds. Certines, once so beloved, became insupportable. Its gentle rustic melancholy ill consorted with the classic beauty of Pulcheria. He longed to go to Italy, to Greece, to shores lapped by the deep blue of the Mediterranean. He made great walks in an aimless sort of way, passing the distant hills, wandering in wild and lonely spots. But all this energy was to no purpose, until at last his struggles for freedom became maddening. One day after a long march, gun in hand, he was returning home through the marsh lands and by the great ponds; tired and oppressed by their heavy vapours, the thought of his bondage became unbearable. He felt himself sinking beneath the load of his chain, and falling a victim into the jaws of fate. In a moment, without reflection, save that in some indistinct, almost unconscious way there was a rash appeal to destiny to decide whether he should live to be a man or not, he cocked his gun, put the barrel in his mouth, and ran some fifty paces. It was a moment of chaos; never did he fall lower. The

awful danger he had run woke him somewhat out of his fevered nightmare, and he saw a streak of dawn.

Every term he came back from college to find his sister Blanche, who was a few years his junior, growing as himself, in knowledge and in stature. The two with their mother formed a perfect unity. It was impossible in the long run for Edgar to keep his secret from them; and when they knew it, and appreciated his struggles to free himself, they used every art to help him, especially ridicule, in which Edgar himself joined, having a firm belief that laughter would often overcome evils when nothing else would. But these united efforts would perhaps have been altogether vain, had not a circumstance occurred which revealed in his nature a force stronger than that which was misleading him.

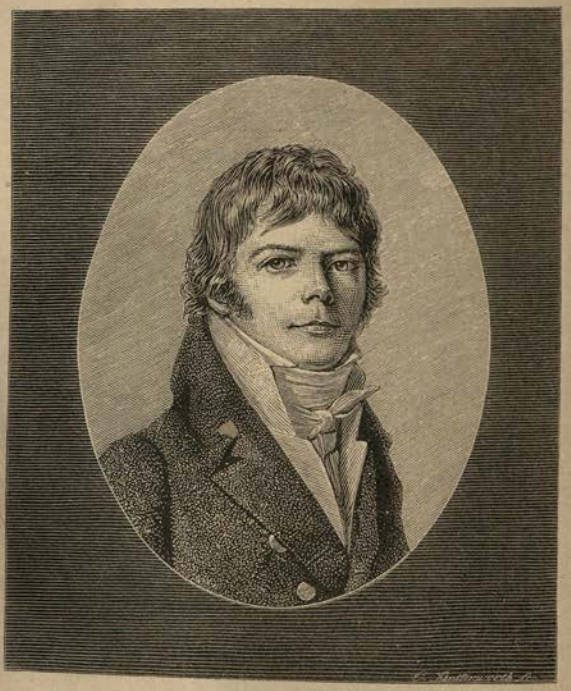
One warm September evening, at the end of a long walk in the wood, Edgar with his mother and sister were surprised by a thunderstorm. It was more than usually terrible. At last a fearful flash played around them, and seemed to envelop them in flames. They clung together, uttering the same cry. In that moment Edgar realised what his mother and sister were to him. The lightning flash had set him free.

Book II.

THE VOCATION.

"Is it for human will
To institute such impulses? still less
To disregard their promptings . . .
. . . Be sure that God
Ne'er dooms to waste the strength He deigns impart!
Be sure they sleep not whom God needs! nor fear
Their holding light His charge, when every hour
That finds that charge delayed, is a new death."

—*Paracelsus.*



JEROME QUINET (1807, *at the age of* 38).

To face p. 37.

CHAPTER I.

LYONS. 1817–1820.

"What oppressive joy was mine
When life grew plain, and I first viewed the thronged,
The everlasting concourse of mankind."

—*Paracelsus.*

IN the autumn of 1817 Edgar Quinet left the College of Bourg for that of Lyons. Here he met with singular sympathy from the director, the professors, and even from his schoolfellows; and being himself a different being from what he had been two years before, the new world into which he now entered wore a totally different hue. His life at Lyons was the aurora of his existence. The heavy clouds which had hung over his mind and heart had dispersed, and the bright, warm rays of his intelligence went forth, lightening up the great world spread out before him, his heart leaping for joy as each new vista unfolded itself.

The College of Lyons had a man of original mind for its director. A tall, spare man, with head bent low, pallid and severe-looking, the Abbé Rousseau had the sweetness and the mildness of the truly wise in heart.

That his wisdom and goodness were not always appreciated, we may gather from the fact that, six months after Edgar Quinet came to Lyons, there was a barring-out in the college. No cause existed sufficient to have brought it about, but a spirit of rebellion had seized other colleges, and Lyons caught the infection. The fire smouldered some little time, and then burst forth. One evening the pupils in one of the halls suddenly rose,

extinguished the candles, drove out the masters, locked the doors, and made a tremendous uproar. Next day, when the director tried to speak to the malcontents, his voice was drowned in murmurs. He called six boys out, and summarily expelled them from the college. This, however, did not allay the trouble, for that evening the pupils of another quarter of the college rose in the night, took possession of their hall, barricaded it with the desks, and, collecting all the books and candlesticks to serve as ammunition, prepared to stand a regular siege. The arrangements complete, they began to make a horrible noise. The whole college was soon in commotion. The servants got great billets of wood, with which they battered the doors of the barricaded hall, while others tried to break them open with hatchets; the besieged meanwhile uttering cries of "No more omelettes!" "No more haricot beans!" After an hour's assault and battery the doors gave way, the desks were overturned, and the masters entered victorious. Eight more of the boys were at once expelled, and four others were singled out for the same punishment.

Madame Quinet seems to have been afraid that Edgar had lost his good sense. In his exculpatory letter he answers her, that he is not quite such a fool as to hazard his own happiness and hers for the pleasure of joining in a purposeless riot. "Calm yourself, then, my good mother," he writes, "and be sure that the thought of the harm I should do you will all my life prevent me from running into the way of error, even if duty itself were not a sufficient motive."

But these expressions, used in a moment of self-assertion, give no idea of the admiration the young collegian had for his mother, and the immense influence that she exercised over him. Nearly three hundred of Edgar Quinet's letters, the majority of them written to his mother, have been published. Those written from college at Lyons, when he was between fifteen and eighteen, are

full of lamentations at his separation from her, and of assurances of his intense devotion. Incidentally they give several graphic touches, which enable us to realise the personal appearance both of the young man and his mother. We see the latter in her "triumphant beauty," either walking in her hat adorned with a large flower, and a tightly-fitting dress trimmed with lace, or at some evening party, wearing a head-dress of blue velvet, "which became her marvellously well;" we see her exercising a charm so peculiarly entrancing that her son can only liken it to "an unheard-of manner," and especially devoting herself to the lad, whom she consoled in strains eloquent and tender. Then we have Edgar himself, getting dusty and out of repair at school, wanting new clothes and new boots, his father coming and taking him to a tailor's, where he is arrayed in a blue cloth coat and pantaloons, a waistcoat of goat's hair, and a hat with a very broad brim, then the fashion, called a *bolivar*. Ardent, sensitive, nervous, it is clear from these letters that he is fonder of making poetry than studying mathematics; that, as it often happens to such minds, memory fails at the most important moments, and the problem on which he has spent an earnest and toilsome hour suddenly disappears from his mental tablets, leaving no trace behind; that he is nervously anxious for extra instruction; that he dreads the examination, eagerly deprecating the presence of his father on the occasion; and that when the time arrives he does not succeed so well as his more phlegmatic companions.

French college life was certainly dull in the extreme. Shut up in almost conventual seclusion, apparently only going out under supervision and in file, or when relatives or friends came and begged for a day's holiday, it would not be surprising if Edgar's letters to his mother were far more homesick than they are. But they are infinitely more than mere unavailing regrets for her society; they are a really intelligent effort to supply the want by cor-

respondence. In them he gives expression to his inmost thoughts, using no reserve; he refers freely to his masters, his schoolfellows, his relatives, his father, and above all to himself. If there is anything in the world a youth shrinks from discussing with his elders, it is his loves and his rhymes, but it was just on these topics that Edgar was most unreserved with his mother.

The way in which they work together to destroy the remains of the chain which had once bound him to the fair Pulcheria is quite amusing. Madame Quinet was evidently thoroughly French in the ability with which she used the art of killing by ridicule. Edgar is made at last to laugh at himself for ever yielding to attractions so commonplace as those of a cold and coquettish Célimène.

But not only the tenderest feelings of his heart are thus laid bare for his mother's criticism, but the still more susceptible emotions of his mind.

"Here, my dear mother," he writes two days before he attained his seventeenth year, "are some bad verses, but I have little mind indeed when I cease to think of thee. It seems as if all my faculties reside in thy heart. If Tibullus and Propertius had had such a mother as I, they would not, I imagine, have written so many verses upon profane love."

Doubtless these lines, one hundred and eighty in number, would have appalled an ordinary mother. But Edgar was sure of a critic at once sympathetic and unsparing. So on another occasion he writes:—

"I find in thy sweet rebukes a thousand times more charm than in reading a romance. Every moment I am tempted to cry out with the prophet king, who had also loved a Pulcheria (but had not, as I, forgotten her), 'Thy language is for me sweeter than the honey of the valley of Jehoshaphat' (a quotation, by the way, quite patristic in its freedom). . . .

"The Jews taught their children to read out of the Bible, the Mahometans out of the Koran, mine shall have no other books than thy letters.

"The first syllables that they learn to spell shall be those which thou hast written, then the first tears which they will

shed over what they read will be tears of love. I will pronounce over their heads the word of blessing which thou hast pronounced over mine; I will address to thy 'children's children' the hymn of tenderness that I have consecrated to thee; they shall embrace me in pronouncing thy name. And if I am to have evil days, where but from thy letters shall I draw strength to cope with misfortune? Where otherwise shall I seek consolation in sorrow? Is it not from thee that I can learn how to struggle against destiny? Adieu, adieu."

This tendency in Edgar Quinet to fall into idolatry at every stage in his youth shows how deeply the religious sentiment was rooted in his being. It was in him, as in every great mind, the most living force; and it discovered itself in adoring veneration for whatever was strong, beautiful, loving, and true. That he was led step by step through an idolatrous worship of the humanly strong, beautiful, loving, and true, marks him out as one fitted hereafter to deal with the same experience in humanity, of whose history his own life thus afforded so interesting a microcosm.

A passionate devotee of the violin, Edgar Quinet was an acquisition to the church choir; to enable him to practise, the priests gave him a kind of tool-house which had been made in the thick wall of the college overlooking the Rhone. By heaping up the broken bricks on the floor, and removing a few others overhead, he was able to stand upright amongst the cobwebs which covered the walls, and even to introduce a reading-desk and a cane chair. The only light came through a lattice window, overhung by a heavy roof; but the den had a door and a key, and here he could indulge that taste for solitude so necessary to the born thinker.

The Abbé Rousseau watched what Quinet would do with his retreat, and was apparently satisfied, for although his pupil constantly violated rules, missing his classes, daily worship, and even his meals, he never gave him a reprimand. During the three years Edgar was at Lyons the only approach at fault-finding he could remember was

on one occasion, when he presented himself at the review held every Sunday with one of his shoes uncleaned, and then all the Abbé did was to smile and sigh and pass on.

Hardly anywhere but in a semi-monastic institution could Edgar have enjoyed the advantage of such arbitrary beneficence; almost free to study how and what he would, he soon felt a delight in learning equal to anything that he had ever experienced in the wildest rambles of his childhood. The classes, which at Bourg had seemed so detestably dry and difficult, now appeared easy and interesting. Opening a copy of Ovid, he began to read. To his astonishment the mechanical difficulties of translation were gone. He felt that he not only understood the sense, but enjoyed the poetry. He began to read not only the Latin authors, but their commentators, Casaubon, Scaliger, Erasmus, and others, in an old Elzevir edition which had belonged to his grandfather. The Abbé Rousseau, perceiving the intellectual hunger which had seized the youth, opened his own library to him, but not without some trepidation as to where all this reading would end.

It was while he was thus drinking in draught after draught of old-world lore that the historic faculty arose, and the vision of the old Roman world began to appear on his mental horizon. So great was his enjoyment in this new world, that falling ill, his consolation was to hear a schoolfellow read by his bedside the finest books of the "Æneid." Tacitus was his favourite author, and after him Gregory of Tours. And why? Because they both treated of persons and times his own experience enabled him to understand. His childhood had passed among political convulsions, and he himself had been dazzled by the colossal form of the imperial tyrant who bestrode the world; he himself had seen wave after wave of invaders pouring over the soil of France; he had even talked with them and lived in their society: naturally then he found a peculiar charm in histories

which related parallel events and delineated parallel characters in a previous epoch of the world.

But he did not confine himself to the Latin authors. In reading them he had caught a glimpse of the true historic method: the traces of the past lying petrified in the present, the whole to be vivified and understood in the light of the eternal sameness of human nature; and henceforth all history became to him a field of research. Few things interested him more than the revolutions of language. When only fourteen he would not let a word pass without examining it closely, and searching out its history in that of manners, customs, opinions, and laws.

Such was the freedom of the times, that every day when he went to mass he always carried with him a great Latin Bible, in which he read during the function. He read it through in this way, and when he had finished it he took in its place the Confessions of St. Augustine, and the "Imitation of Jesus Christ," the series ending with the sermons of the Protestant Necker. A word from one of the masters would have stopped these Bible readings, but no one spoke that word. He read on, and made his own reflections. It shows the bent of his mind when he tells us that they were purely historic. If he paused to look at what was going on, it was to discover, if he could, the origin and meaning of the ritual, and to consider what relation it had to the text which he was reading. Absorbed in his book, his ear sometimes caught the monkish monotone of the liturgy; in a moment he was living in the atmosphere of Oriental antiquity or of the Middle Ages. Thus to his fine sense of sound spoke the voices of the past, and he had but to recall their accents, and the circumstances under which he heard them; and what more easy than for a door of history to fly open, and ages apparently dead and buried to live again in his imagination!

Such was the intensity of his enthusiasm, that after working all day at mathematics, he would spend the

greater part of the night in reading in the original: Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, and Tasso. His custom, in the study of the past, was to wake up before daybreak, light up a dark lanthorn, and begin to pore over his favourite authors. In reading the Italian poets in after-life he never could divest himself of a certain weird, early-morning feeling: the first glimmerings of sunlight, and the solemn notes of the clocks striking all over the city.

Although read under such circumstances, the Italian poets quite supplanted in his affections their elder Roman brothers, and henceforth Italy rather than Rome became the object of his devotion—a devotion which, after that he owed to France, never waned as long as he lived.

He had had the notion that the study of mathematics dried up the imagination; his first master soon convinced him that there could not be a greater mistake. The professor was himself a living witness to the contrary, for he had an equal devotion to two things: the integral calculus and fairy tales. M. Cachuat very soon inspired his pupil with a sense of the sublimity of the higher mathematics. His imagination thus fired with the immeasurable possibilities of the science, he went on to study it under a mind of less romantic mould. M. Clerc's severe method was of the greatest advantage to Edgar. His pupil's habit of covering his papers with rhymes much annoyed him; he would not suffer a single error to pass, but required absolute correctness.

Algebra struck Edgar's imaginative mind by its singular language, so mysterious yet so full of light, and by its ability to express general and universal truths, while it refused to condescend to explain particular ones. It suggested literary ideas, for he saw that its professors eliminated from their problems all that was needless, expressing the truth to be conveyed in the smallest number of terms, thus giving him the idea of a style brief, concise, radiant. The application of algebra to

geometry, the properties of the curves, delighted him. Its equations, shining forth into an infinity of truths, all alike indubitable, fortified his innate love of truth, and gave him more and more a taste for light.

Though living so solitary a life, he seems to have had not only the good-will of his masters, but also of his fellow-collegians. All his recollections of them were pleasant and agreeable. This immunity from the suffering which other boys of like tendencies would have certainly had to endure was owing partly to the impression made by his genius, and partly to a powerful sentiment of self-respect, indigenous and strengthened by his peculiar education, but chiefly to a fineness of nature that caused him instinctively to comprehend the feelings of others, and to shrink from inflicting any real wound, combined with a philosophic tone of mind and a gaiety of heart, which made him ready to laugh over evils he could not cure. One of his fellow-students was a merry-faced youth, named Jules Janin, in after-years among the most distinguished of Parisian *littérateurs*. Janin, like Quinet, was in the choir, playing the harp to the violin accompaniment of his fellow-minstrel. However, their companionship was cut short, Janin being one of those expelled in consequence of the barring-out. Quinet will be his fellow-student again at the *École de Droit*.

CHAPTER II.

PARIS, CERTINES. 1820.

"I am wandering in a vague infinitude stretching out around me."
—*Mes Idées.*

M. QUINET appears to have designed his son for the army; at any rate, he determined that he should go to Paris and enter the *École Polytechnique.* When, therefore, Edgar left the college at Lyons in September 1820, his father proceeded to carry out his plan, not expecting, it would seem, any opposition from his son. But Edgar had a double reason for objecting to the military life: he did not wish to serve under the White flag, and he was already dreaming of making literature his profession. In those days, and in France especially, little account was taken of the personal desires of any young man; a family council was held, and his fate decided. Edgar found himself in this position when he reached Paris, and he inveighs, in a letter written to his mother, who remained at home, against the cruelty of imprisoning him again in a college, and the absurdity of the family saying it is for his benefit and not for theirs.

"To avoid taking care of one's children, the best way is to shut them up carefully; so thought my grandmother when she put my father into a drawer of the commode: so it is now thought when they propose to shut me up in a bigger drawer."

In his anger he did not even spare his mother; finding satirical remarks did not move her, he sought to

work upon her feelings by a picture of his possible death in the college, and asks her what response she will give when called to account for his fate. But, concludes he, with amusing bitterness—

"Those who consent during my life to see me so unhappy, so desolate as I am, will not be capable of a regret after my death."

This opposition, coming from one who had hitherto been so dutiful, was finally successful. The women, his mother and his aunt, exerted their influence in his favour, and M. Quinet at length gave way. His aunt proposed that in six months he should go into the office of one of her relatives, who was a banker. To this arrangement his father agreed, it being understood that during the interval he was to study commercial law, political economy, the English language, &c., and to learn to write in a style suitable for a counting-house.

When he left college he passed a short time in company with his mother and sister at Certines. Here they discussed every possible calling but the one he was to follow. To all he found an objection, until his mother in despair said that she saw very well that he had a dislike for every profession by which he could live. With his sister he wandered about the neighbourhood, sometimes joyous, sometimes melancholy, taking long rides, reaching to the highest ridges of the distant mountains. As they looked down upon the scenery on either side—the one an Arcadian land where the light and shade scarcely moved, so gentle was the wind that played over it; the other a desert, full of deep shadows, of marshes, of wild solitudes, of unfathomable mysteries—Edgar felt that these two landscapes allegorised the condition of his own soul.

Speaking of this period of his existence, 1820, he says:—

"I, who have admitted to such a degree the influence of inanimate things over man, then felt this influence as much as

any creature in the world could feel it. It possessed me, it tyrannised over me. A nature uncultured and neglected, in a land where the deaths exceeded the births, was my nurse, my master, my teacher.

"Even to-day I feel myself to be the child of our vast unpeopled deserts, of our wastes, of our heaths, of our tracks of rolling granite in the Crau, of our uninhabitable maremmas, of our lonely ponds" (there were about fifteen hundred in this wild land, the desert of the Dombes), "wooded lakes which no wind ever ruffles, and of which the serenity is so deceitful. However little I descend into myself, there again I find all these things.

"My whole youth has been embarrassed, enveloped by the influence of this primeval nature, not yet conquered, not yet regulated, not yet made obedient to man. It has exercised over me a sovereign sway. Not knowing to whom to betake itself, from the depth of its solitudes it has sought me, it is I whom it has possessed with its complaints, its sighs, its miseries, its inscrutable contagious desolations. It has plunged me into an atmosphere where men can scarcely live, an atmosphere full of aspirations without end, of hopes without body, of imaginary beings, impossible in this present existence.

"This caressing and murderous nature did not kill me as it did all my companions, it revenged itself in filling me at one and the same time with enchantment and despair. For my companions it was death; for me worse than death—anguish, agony of heart, irrestrainable visions, discouragements without cause, that enervating languor which follows the vision of a world which one had imagined one's own; the mirage of a leafy desert, stagnant, sighing, from whence constantly rises a vapour, coloured like a prism by the dying light of day. When the autumnal mists, creeping, born of the earth, arose like mournful ghosts across a blotch of setting sun, dropping as they went their robes on every bush, and mounting slowly towards the light, how was it possible for the spirit not to dart forth to seize them? And when to all these phantoms were joined those born of the hungry heart of a youthful soul wandering in these maremmas, it was indeed too much. Nothing remained but to bow the head and let the sweet scourge pass over it in silence."

Byron in the third canto of "Childe Harold," written in 1816, seems to teach that man is nothing save as he becomes the impersonation, the incarnation of the spirit which dwells in Nature. He asks this question—

> "Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part
> Of me and of my soul, as I of them?"

A question to which in a previous paragraph, he had thus replied—

> 'I live not in myself, but I become
> Portion of that around me ; I can see
> Nothing to loathe in nature, save to be
> A link reluctant in a fleshly chain,
> Classed among creatures, when the soul can flee,
> And with the sky, the peak, the heaving plain
> Of ocean, or the stars, mingle, and not in vain.
> And thus I am absorbed, and this is life."

Quinet, on the contrary, felt this life by absorption to be the slavery and death into which all are born. He did not, of course, understand at the time the effort his soul was making to assert its own moral personality, but it prepared him to grasp and uphold tenaciously the leading idea of his own life and of all his works : namely, that the purpose of man's being is to develop the ideal within him, and that in doing so he must assert his liberty, must free himself from the world that enchains him. It was from the scenes of his childhood and of his youth that he learnt that lore which gave him such an insight into the sources of all human things. From the dismal scenes in the Dombes he learnt to understand the hearts of primitive men, subject all their days to the tyranny he had himself felt so oppressive, and to sympathise with their blind but heroic efforts to assert their independence, and to become something more than a portion of that around them. Thus he was not only able to enter into the thoughts of the barbarous Frank, of the lonely hermit, and of the sad-hearted serf toiling on through ages : a thrall in body and mind; but the impression of these scenes gave him an insight into the hopes and fears, the aspirations and depressions, of all who lived among similar influences the wide world over, so that he was able even to become the companion and revealer of the thoughts of those whose traces have long since passed into the dim twilight of the prehistoric

ages. Every institution, every idea he henceforth traced to the place of its birth, demanding its true meaning of the nature which had cradled it. It was doubtless the instinct which he even then had of being possessor of some of the secrets of the universe, that was driving him to rest content with nothing but a career in which he should live to unfold them.

But how? that was the question. He stood on the threshold of a new world. Between the past and the present there was the terrible gulf of the Revolution. And not only had the old land been ploughed and harrowed, but the heavy tread of the imperial armies had gone over the luxuriant shoots of the new seed, and intellectual Europe was apparently trodden into one hard, flat plain. How to cultivate this waste, how to drop a seed of living thought, and when? And yet beneath that dead level a secret vegetation was at work. Minds like Quinet's were everywhere, the life-throbs urging them to effort, but despairing and self-distrustful because they thought themselves alone called to the task.

In that autumn of 1820, in the midst of the Forest of Seillon, nigh to the fifteen hundred ponds, in company with the heron and the teal, surrounded at once by a physical and mental vegetation, working silently and secretly, the Creative Spirit came upon him with such power that he felt as one intoxicated. He knew not one of those great names who were to join in the intellectual revival, but he already sympathised with them; nay, his impatience was so great that he longed to run before them and beckon them on. His mind was uneasy as a bird about to migrate, only the migration was to a new moral world rather than to a foreign land, to ideas of which he had caught a glimpse, but which had hitherto baffled his approach. In his ardour he made the effort, but soon learnt that his wings were not yet strong enough for flight.

One idea summed up all his longings, the idea which

also filled the souls of his contemporaries. France—France who had aimed so high only to fall so low; France, at whom the Pharisees of Europe pointed with scorn, as she who would free the nations, herself at last the willing slave of a little Corsican; France judged, punished:—what noble heart would not feel for her, above all among her own sons? But in considering how to help her at such a crisis, who could avoid feeling the torture of a mind rent in twain, a mind which looked back with longing towards the faith and chivalry of the Middle Ages, and forward to the hopes and aspirations of the nineteenth century?

Chateaubriand and Madame de Staël were the literary powers of the day. The first, under the guise of free thought and poetic colouring, sought to enchant France with the past; the latter pointed her to liberty and the future. Although Chateaubriand had first awakened the literary faculty in him, Quinet decided unhesitatingly to follow the female voice. "Here," he said, "is the side on which to advance. Here I shall find the age, life,—the fulfilment of all my presentiments."

But when he contemplated the cynical despair which the terrible disillusions of Leipsic, Moscow, Waterloo, and the Restoration had produced in the popular mind, so that the least effort to find new paths was met by unbelief, sneers, and mockery, he sank back in dismay, crying, "Who will dare to lead the way? Is there no one?"

No answer, save astonishment in some, incredulity in others, and anxiety on the part of his mother. "What!" he said to himself, "I attempt such a task! What folly! How could I dream of it? These ideas of mine, so shadowy and vain, how could I live by them? Is it not the most insensate of enterprises, the most culpable, to judge by the terror of my friends?"

So the thought died down, and he awoke as from a fine dream. All the lights which had shot up so

brightly around him went out in darkness. This hidden movement enclosed in a solitary soul gave place to stern reality. In place of all their feverish hopes there remained nothing but a world of emptiness, over which the biting north wind blew in gusty squalls, upon whose leaden sea played the lambent light of a meaningless phosphorescence, and whose forests bent down with an eternal moan.

CHAPTER III.

PARIS. 1821–22.

"I fear that for a poor man, and indeed for every man, the possession of a sensitive constitution and a lively intellect are decided disadvantages."
—*Peasant Life in the North.*

IT was under the influence of such emotions that Edgar Quinet went with his father to Paris in 1820, not of course that he consciously realised them in the distinct manner now described. This is the form in which after nearly forty years more of thought and culture he recalled them, giving their meaning and intention as truly as was possible for human veracity. At the opening of his autobiography, he devotes a chapter to the question of its being permissible to colour, exaggerate, or fill up a lapse of memory in such works, and he rigidly decides against the slightest deviation from truthfulness, declaring emphatically of his own work, "All that which will be offered to the reader will be of scrupulous exactitude." We may therefore believe that in a way then quite undefined, but most real, all these emotions were struggling in his heart, prompting him to that first act of opposition to his father's will, when he obstinately refused to be content with the decision that consigned him to the Polytechnic School and the military profession, working still when he was in the banker's office, and driving him at the end of six months to throw up his situation,

and appear for a time in a guise so contradictory to his whole nature, that of an undutiful and disobedient son.

For some time he was under the parental frown. His father was so annoyed that he refused to support him. Left thus to his own resources, he showed the stuff he was made of by the vigour and purity of his life. Far from yielding to the temptations of vice, he worked away at law, mathematics, poetry, history, philosophy, and foreign languages.

His poverty, however, was great, and he endured many privations. Later on, when things were better with him, his breakfast in Paris was only a tablet of chocolate and a piece of bread, his dinners costing little over twenty sous (9½d.) a day, a reading-room being his refuge in cold weather, so that at this particular time he probably lived even more economically. The trial was the greater since he was already a favourite in high society at Paris.

At such houses as those of his aunt and of the *Maréchale* Ney, he met persons of distinction. Yet such was the independence of his spirit, that he refused to make any use of their friendship, accepting only the help of a young artisan, whose family were under considerable obligation to Madame Quinet. This friend had been a companion of his boyhood, and was then a designer of stuffs in Paris. He offered Edgar a share in his humble lodging, and it is possibly to this place he refers in a letter written to his father at the end of 1821, wherein he tells him that he is going to change his lodgings for one where he will only have to pay eighty francs (£3, 4s.) a year, and where he will have a window that looks over the trees, so that he will be out of the noise of the city.

From October 1820 to July 1822 he was in Paris. How much of that period he was in disgrace, it is difficult to discover; probably it was only for a short

time that his parents entirely withdrew their countenance from him. For two months in the latter part of the year 1821 his correspondence even with his mother ceased. In December he wrote to his father, seeking to appease his wrath, and to defend himself from the charge of lightness. Learned M. Quinet had evidently paid little attention to his son's character, or he never would have feared that fickleness would be its weak point. It is not too much to say that in that winter of 1821 it would have been difficult to find in all Paris a young man of steadier purpose. Moreover, the purity of his heart and manners, and the general amiability of his character, won him the confidence of old and young, the careful and the reckless, as the following incident, which occurred some time in 1821, will serve to show. Writing to his mother, he says:—

"I met at my restaurant Adrien de Latournelle, who begged me to come and see him in a week without fail. I went, and what was my surprise when the landlady informed me that she had sent all her servants to the *Morgue* to see if Adrien's body had not been brought up by the drags. She told me that he was overwhelmed with debts, had sold his watch, his clothes, and for a week had not been heard of. Just at this moment his uncle arrived; he asked my name, and implored me to go to Melun, where I should find his nephew, ready to enlist in a regiment of dragoons. He gave me a letter for the colonel, and authorised me to use armed force if my eloquence proved insufficient to induce his nephew to return. A desire to emulate my grandfather, whom you have always represented as a great peacemaker, made me at once decide to go. The difficulty was to unearth the delinquent in a city of 20,000 inhabitants. I went round to all the public-houses, beginning at the lowest floor. After many useless visits, I saw at a little round table a tall pale form, leaning motionless over the *Quotidienne*. It was the poor prodigal, without a sou in his pocket. I came like Providence to help him to pay for the milk-posset which he had had the audacity to order. It was only after a long fight that he promised to return to his father.

"I gave the host half the money I had in my pocket, and used the rest to bring us back to town. Adrien dared not go out at first; and my lodging served him as a refuge. Before

going to the office I prepared his meals, and I found him there again in the evening. Happily this did not continue many days."

M. Quinet, absorbed in his calculations, only knew that his son had opposed his wishes, and it would appear to have been years before he could get over the annoyance.

In the letter just quoted, written January 1822, in the slightly bitter vein into which Edgar Quinet fell when much hurt, he says: "I do not forget my father, but I so well understand my wrong doings that I do not know what tone to take with him."

This letter was to let his mother know of his first literary venture. The idea occurred to him of a series of pictures of the manners, prejudices, knowledge, and men of different epochs; and to link them all together, and to catch popular interest by representing them as "The Memoirs of the Wandering Jew." He took the idea to a publisher, who, looking coldly at him at first, sent for him the next day, telling him that if the work answered to the conception he should be pleased to engage him to undertake it. However, it would seem that in the long run he printed the book at his own expense, selling his mattress and chairs to do so, and looked after the publishing to some extent himself. This little book, philosophic and witty, came out eventually under the title "Tablettes du Juif Errant." It was an equally clever and perhaps a more original idea than the "Diable Boiteux" of Le Sage to make the wandering Jew relate the history of the ages through which he had lived, especially as the author had no intention of being seriously understood, but only of giving a few satirical sketches of the Middle Age. A *jeu d'esprit* in form, it came however from a soul that never could be anything else but in earnest, and it was at bottom as serious as anything Edgar Quinet subsequently wrote. The romantic movement was flowing swift and strong, a little spent perhaps in Germany, but beginning

in France and England to set in with a tide which was to carry before it many of the finest minds in both countries. It was just the time when Chateaubriand and Walter Scott were in the heyday of their popularity. With a nature as imaginative and poetic as either of these great romanticists, with a soul singularly capable of realising the past and living in it, Edgar Quinet felt the fascination of the movement, and feared to be entangled again in bondage to the old superstitions. For with that discernment of spirits which was so specially his gift, this young man of eighteen felt instinctively that it was an *ignis fatuus*, and would lead him back into the land of shadows. Thirty-five years later he was able, therefore, in the midst of a most serious career and of a great literary reputation, to look back with satisfaction on this little book and to declare that it still expressed his mind.

His mother was evidently pleased with its Voltairean style, which was in harmony with her taste; strange to say, his father also read it and enjoyed it, but without knowing who was the author. It was such a success with the public that the publisher suspended its sale for two months, fearing that it would get him into some difficulty.

In January of this year he saw Talma in the tragedy of *Sylla*, and says it was the greatest treat that he had had since he had been in Paris. "It is impossible to conceive anything more dramatic than the proud simplicity and sardonic smile of Talma. I shall remember him all my life, with his long purple robe, his deep voice, and Roman profile."

Writing in the following May to his mother, he says: "I go every Sunday to your church, it seems to me that I am nearer to you."

He was now a member of one of the most influential classes in France—the Paris students. He read law until his head was full of misdemeanours and the scaffold,

attended lectures at the *École de Droit*, and sought from time to time a situation in some office, but the right situation could never be exactly found. Literature, which to his friends seemed only a desultory amusement, to him was the most serious of professions. When the legal vacation was approaching he had a schoolboy's desire to go home for the holidays. He writes a letter to his father, in which, after defending with manly freedom his right to choose the literary profession, he explains the difficulties he has had in accepting the hard terms of the places offered in lawyer's offices, and concludes by asking his father's permission to rejoin the family during the holidays. As to the expense, whether he comes on foot, as he would like to do, or joins the coach-loads of his companions, it will be at as an economic a rate as possible. It would appear that his prayer was granted, for we find him spending the autumn at Certines. Then with a free conscience he gave himself to his beloved studies, spending the time in tracing out the designs of some great poems, and going down pretty deep into the metaphysics of history.

Every New Year he generally wrote a letter to his mother. These are naturally the longest and among the most interesting of the series of the 274 letters published. At the opening of 1823 he writes :—

"I have passed New Year's day in deep meditation. When I woke very early in the morning, I determined to begin my year by writing you a few words. I then read the 'Imitation of Jesus Christ' and 'Massillon's Sermons.' This reading rendered my thoughts so fervid, that I did nothing all day long but pray to God for you, beseeching Him, asking with much perseverance to grant me all that I need to please you more."

Early this year he tells his mother he has been reading Sir Walter Scott's "Peveril of the Peak," and thinks it one of his best romances. In March he was pleased at receiving a letter in acknowledgment of a copy of his

"Wandering Jew" from Benjamin Constant, the friend of Madame de Staël, and who was just then attaining the zenith of his popularity as the leader of the Liberal opposition in the Chamber of Deputies, and the defender of constitutional liberty in France. Later on in the same year Edgar Quinet is contemplating an historical work on the Middle Ages. He hopes to show that these ages have been misunderstood, and that they had a grand poetic and philosophic life. But the great subject at which during these early years he was working, was the gradual development of the Individual in the history of Humanity. Without a guide or a model he pursued this study through the ages until he ended in producing a history of the Human Conscience and Moral Personality (1823). Then he was led to attempt a more considerable work on political institutions in their relations with religion, each epoch of Christian civilisation being typified by a saint or a monument. These juvenile works were not published, but were doubtless the basis of others that have been.

This mental maturity in a young man of twenty-one would be almost incredible if biography did not supply several parallel cases. What makes it specially interesting in Edgar Quinet, and indicates it to have been real genius, is, that it was associated with a heart not a year beyond his age.

Here is a charming little bit in which he gleefully relates to his mother how he and his friend Theodore delivered themselves from the enchantments of some Duessa, and then immediately went and again lost their hearts :—

"I have been singing victory for days. Reason had to be very courageous to overcome enervated thoughts. I have escaped *her* chains for ever.

"*She* sent word by Theodore that I was to go and see her, that she would never pardon me if I did not come, &c. I had the strength to remain in my hole without budging. Then, representing to myself the necessity of being a *man*, of not allowing my intentions to be mollified or diverted, perhaps also by a

touch of self-conceited stoicism, I managed to restrain myself. I inculcated my hardness on Theodore, and he joined me in the struggle. However, all he could do was to carry elsewhere his vows. I had just related to him Goethe's attachment to that Marguerite who afterwards became the Marguerite of Faust. In leaving me in the street, he sees behind the glass door of a reading-room a charming young form of about sixteen years of age, with black hair, black eyes, and that innocent look which is no longer found anywhere except in books. It is Marguerite, only better! He enters, asks the loan of some books. The poor fellow feels as moved as before Madame . . . In the goodness of his heart he runs to tell me that he has found the common remedy for our ills. He drags me to Marguerite. I tremble even more than he does. The sound of her voice, her timidity, her sweet look, these things have brought us again under the same yoke. We love her as an ideal thought, without rivalry or hatred. She reanimates us as an inspiration, and detaches us entirely from the coquetry of Madame . . . I don't know if even antiquity, with its story of Orestes and Pylades, could show a like example of disinterestedness and unity in the most secret sentiments of the heart."

Such revelations of himself, though made only to his mother, laid him open to unexpected stabs. His nature had never been understood by his father, and now it began to develop heights and depths, lengths and breadths, beyond even his mother's comprehension. Essentially a woman of the eighteenth century, the very real purity and elevation of Madame Quinet's character was not sufficiently original to rise above the ideas of the age in which it had been formed and through which she had received all her ideas and principles. She seems to have believed in the doctrine that a young man must sow his wild oats, and to have been rather chagrined to find that Edgar did not appear to have any to sow. No doubt she thought it a necessary concomitant of manliness. She, therefore, rallied him occasionally, and that we imagine in a style rather Voltairean in its stinging mischievousness.

What a peculiar trial! and what a testimony to the purity, the love and the strength of his nature, are the

earnest expostulations with which he meets this strange banter.

"If you knew the harm sarcasms do me when they come from you, you would for ever renounce such a poisoned weapon. What is the use of loving, if it is not to spare one another? It seems to me that it is preparing for ourselves vain regrets, if we should have to confess sooner or later, that instead of using all our faculties to embellish this short life, or mutually to console each other, we sometimes disenchanted it and dried it up at its source."

Book III.

THE WANDERER.

"He wanders over many lands, passes through many cities among men of many climes. . . . His hand clasps the hands of other men, for his heart is open to benevolence and gratitude; but in that heart is a void—a void that naught can fill, naught but the fatherland."—*Mazzini.*



"The moon was just emerging from the clouds."

To face p. 65.

CHAPTER I.

THE JURA—SWITZERLAND—LONDON—STRASBURG.
1823–1826.

"What magnificence! I was a poet, as every man would have been."
—*Letter to his Mother, Dover, March* 31, 1825.

THAT prophetic genius which Edgar Quinet possessed discovered itself in the first symbolic character with which he chose to associate his name. The "Wandering Jew" foreshadowed the experience of his life for the next ten or twelve years.

In the autumn of 1823 he made a visit to the Jura and the Lake of Geneva, accompanied by an old schoolfellow, a curious creature, steeped in Rousseau, and incurably misanthropic. The two friends met at Nantua, a little town in the Jura, about twenty miles from Bourg, built at the extremity of a lake darkened by precipitous woods. They set off in a tilted cart in company with a priest and some contrabandists. After visiting some spots where the Rhône loses itself, and where it darts out again between two rocks, they went on through the picturesque river bed of the Valserine, and the wild gorge where the river forces its way at the foot of the ruined Fort de l'Ecluse, on to Gex, where they ascended the heights of the Jura. The tall, sombre-looking peasants in their black shirts elevated Quinet's ideas of pastoral life. He drank milk in their chalets, and wondered greatly at the enormous coppers. From the summit of La Faucille he saw the Lake of Geneva and the Alps

and heard the tinkle of the cow-bells, with the sound of a drum which the shepherds beat to keep off the bears.

The tour was a pedestrian one, and they reached Ferney as it was getting dark. Quinet ran on to find Voltaire's park and chateau, while Brun seated himself on a heap of stones with his back turned to the dwelling of his master's opponent. Next morning they went to see Rousseau's birthplace, which turned out to be a little shop where they sold tools. Brun was disappointed and cantankerous, so after a sail upon the lake they agreed to separate for a time.

Quinet wanted to go on a pilgrimage to the early home of his mother at Crans. On his way to Crans he visited the park of Madame de Staël. From an itinerary, of which only a page in pencil has been preserved, the enthusiasm and filial piety with which he regarded everything connected with his mother is very manifest.

In the following autumn he made another journey on foot with his cousin to the Grande Chartreuse. But when at home he was a laborious student, hardly allowing himself any recreation. Every now and then he woke up to the folly of this sort of life, and would permit himself to be taken to a ball, and by a great effort of reason he determined to learn to waltz. After the trip into Dauphiny just referred to, he wished to go back to Paris; his father, however, refused, and he was compelled to stay at Charolles a part of the winter of 1824.

This struggle with his father was one of the bitterest trials of his life, and of course the pain was much increased when he had to live under the same roof. However, he had already found a great literary task, and the spirit in which he pursued it may be judged from the following passage in a letter to his mother at the beginning of 1824:—

"My work goes on well. . . . . It brings into exercise all that God has put in me good and upright. I am at the same

time interested in myself, as in an instrument which has a passive harmony, and which only waits the outward action that is to bring forth its melody. To write well is to live well. And I am determined nothing impure, nothing vulgar, shall approach my ideas."

In 1823 Edgar Quinet made a friendship which was not without important consequences in his mental history. His aunt in Paris had a brother-in-law, a Scotchman, and a man of literature. Mr. Smith was no stranger to France, for under Bonaparte he had suffered five years' imprisoment in the Temple, for something he had said in favour of the British Constitution; and again under the Restoration he had been confined four months in the Conciergerie, suspected of writing to the "Morning Chronicle." Finding the young author of the "Tablettes du Juif Errant" an ardent friend of liberty, the old Scotchman opened to him both his heart and his library. Among the books Quinet thus obtained was an English translation[1] of Herder's "Philosophy of the History of Humanity," a work utterly unknown in France, although regarded in Germany as a masterpiece for more than a generation. The reading of this book proved an epoch in Quinet's life, and exercised the very greatest influence on the development of his mind, giving direction to his thoughts, and becoming the source of many of his ideas.

He had, as we have already seen, without any guide or counsellor, made some courageous explorations into the metaphysics of history. In the light of the principles he thus obtained, he examined Bossuet, and wrote a work in consequence. But all these early efforts remained in manuscript, for after he had discovered Herder's great work, he decided that the best thing he could do was to publish a translation of it in French. One difficulty, however, presented itself: he did not know a word of

[1] By T. Churchill, 1800, 2d Ed. 1803. Professor Flint says, "So sympathetic a translation of such a book at a time when Thomas Carlyle was not yet in breeches, is as a mere literary phenomenon instructive."

German. He had first to teach himself the language, and he made his translation three times over before he thought it satisfactory.

These mental efforts in the midst of so many difficulties depressed a temperament always ready to run from one end of the gamut to the other, so that the note he constantly strikes at this time is a melancholy one :—

"Youth in its brightest period is not always the age when the soul has most freshness and brilliancy; either it sinks under the weight of its own riches, or, possessing nothing in the world but a crown of flowers, it is oppressed to suffocation by vast longings. Sometimes it exhausts itself in trying to embrace the universe, or it languishes and fades away of itself. If, in addition, its lot be distress, a wandering life, a bread, bitter and soaked in tears, the more gifted it feels, the more its loneliness breaks its heart. In this struggle, where the feeble fall and the strong obtain fresh strength, youthful genius hides, as best it may, a bleeding heart beneath a garland of immortelles. But, whatever it does its accent betrays it, and proves it wounded to the soul."

Thus Edgar Quinet commences his "Essay" on the works of Herder, 1827, and it is doubtless one of those autobiographic touches so characteristic of his genius. The channel, narrow but deep, in which his affections ran, had been partially blocked for years, so that his heart, having nowhere to turn, fed upon itself. This to a nature alike ardent and melancholy was intolerable. A strong sense of moral duty, and the constant exercise of mental energy, brought him through, but his soul was ever agitated and desponding.

In this condition of mind he met with Herder's "Philosophy of the History of Humanity." As he became alive to the treasure that he had discovered, his experience was that of the weary worshipper of Osiris, who, in the presence of a repose immutable through storms and revolutions, looks into the calm face of his god, and feels peace steal into his soul.

"For myself," he says, "this book has been an inexhaustible

source of consolation and joy. Never, no never, have I quitted it without having obtained a more elevated idea of the mission of man on the earth, never without believing more profoundly in the reign of justice and of reason, never without feeling myself more devoted to liberty and to my country, and in every way more capable of doing a good action. How many times have I cried out in laying down this book, my heart filled with joy, 'This is the man whom I should like for my friend!'"

Herder was the son of a village schoolmaster in Prussia. His genius forced its way through the dead weight of his father's poverty and prejudice against learning. He became in course of time one of the lights of the learned court of Saxe-Weimar, so that his name shines in luminous constellation with that of Goethe, Schiller, and Wieland. He had been a student at Königsberg under Kant, but though reverencing the man, he opposed his system. Hamann was his real master—an extraordinary personage, who, numbering among his disciples some of the most distinguished men of the day, was regarded by them as gifted with the true prophetic spirit. For Hamann, after running a wild career in early life, had fallen into its natural reward, a state of extreme misery. In his distress he chanced to open a Bible; his whole being was enchained as by some mysterious power in the book, and it led to a revolution in his life. Henceforth he gave himself to study and thought, arriving at last at a feeling of certainty that there existed above everything human, a secret and impenetrable power. Revelation, the history of Humanity, and Nature were, he taught, the three sources by which this Divine power makes known its thoughts to men. They mutually serve to interpret one another.

It was Hamann who inspired Herder with a passion for Hebrew. "No translation," he said, "gave the spirit of the Old Testament Scriptures, and the spirit of a book was the only thing truly living and imperishable in it." The fruit came in Herder's famous work on the spirit of Hebrew poetry.

Herder's works are linked together; they mutually explain each other, the earliest containing all that is peculiar in his way of thinking. At the outset he had been impressed with the idea that as everything in the world had its philosophy and science, there must also be a philosophy and science of that which concerns us most nearly—the history of mankind at large. He regarded history as a living picture of the designs of Providence in human society, a luminous witness of the destiny accorded to human nature, and a revelation of its future. The method which he adopted to exhibit this may be thus summarised:—he proposed to show how, from the operation of external causes, Humanity had reached its present level; to develop in the nature and working of those causes the objects the Creator had in view in forming man, and to indicate his future destiny. Considering the magnitude of his work, and the position he occupies in this field of labour, Quinet styles him "The Herodotus of historical philosophy."

Since Herder's time there has not appeared, says Quinet in his "Essay," a remarkable book in History or Mythology or the Fine Arts which has not more or less felt his creative influence. What Quinet thought of the particular work of which the above is a brief and most imperfect summary, we learn from the introduction with which he prefaced his translation, an introduction which subsequently attracted Goethe's notice, and which, in his "Art and Antiquity," the German poet recommended to the attention of his countrymen.

A publisher at Strasburg undertook to give Quinet two thousand four hundred francs for the work. The first instalment he devoted to a trip to England. He was in this country from the last day of March to the middle of April 1825, and it was during that time that he corrected the proofs of the first part of his translation of Herder, together with his own preface, dating the latter "London," as he happened to be there.

This trip across the channel was his first sight of the sea. He was as delighted as a child, "intoxicated," he says, with admiration. At Calais he ran over the dunes, gathering seaweed, and wandering about the shore till midnight. "Now," he says, "I understood what a vessel really was." He lands at Dover, can scarcely stand for the weather; however, he goes up to the Castle, and on to the cliffs. Nothing escapes him. Once in London, he walks all over the town, gazing at the public buildings, visiting the House of Lords, the Elgin Marbles, Drury Lane; to use his own expression, he goes "ferreting" about. He makes a pilgrimage on foot to Harrow; takes a boat down the Thames, and, landing at Greenwich, talks with the old pensioners, in whose serenity and cheerfulness he discovers a resemblance to the hermits of the Grande Chartreuse. The evenings he passes with his friend Mr. Smith, and is introduced to some distinguished journalists, and also to some violent Radicals. His admiration of the land of liberty is so great that he thinks that he sees in London a truer magnificence than in Paris. He passes hours admiring the Thames and the dome of St. Paul's. His brilliant imagination conjures up all the old memories of English history when he goes to the Tower. He finds Hyde Park a delicious place for a walk by moonlight. Everything in England appears to him illuminated by the glorious atmosphere of liberty. He breathes more freely than in France, and thinks that he now understands how greatly generous institutions add to individual happiness.

This favourable opinion of our country was very much altered later on. In "Merlin l'Enchanteur" he accuses us of the most terrible coldness and selfishness. Several of the reminiscences of this trip appear there again, but the glass he looks through is no longer the red one, but the green.

His holiday over, he goes down to Southampton by

the night coach. All the way he looks out of the window, admiring the little farmhouses in the midst of the large fields, the village churches on the hills, and above all, "the pale beauties of Albion." In fact, his intellectual admiration for beauty makes him rather sentimental over the English ladies, and he leaves our shores in the halo of quite a pretty little love scene.

Before quitting Southampton Water, which, by the way, he likens to the Hellespont, a young lady had to be landed at Portsmouth, and as she is about to descend into the boat the gallant young Frenchman hastens to assist her. "She thanked me," he tells his mother, "in the tongue of her country, and her words were so sweet that they were quite worth the sacrifice of a life." He watches the boat until it is out of sight, and is quite sure that the joy he experienced in the rencounter kept him from feeling ill during the passage. Arrived at Havre he gets on to a rock to see the day break, and then, like some happy schoolboy, this learned translator of Herder spends the whole of a long day on the shore collecting shells, picking up seaweed, and watching the changes of the tide.

The Introduction to Herder's Philosophy of History, which completes this chapter, though much abbreviated, contains the whole line of argument and the principal thoughts of the original. When it was included in his collected works in 1857, the author said:—

"I cannot avoid seeing that all I have written since this first sketch was included in it: Liberty conceived as the foundation and substance of civil history; Moral Order dominating the chaos of events; the reign of Conscience rising above the blind kingdoms of nature; Humanity represented and enveloped in germ in each man; the Individual reflecting the destinies of the species; the confused perception in each man that comes into the world of the humanity that has already preceded him: all these ideas have only got a firmer hold of me the longer I have lived."

INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE HISTORY OF HUMANITY.—1825.

I.

In old times every nation regarded itself as the centre and end of the universe. But as one nation after the other perished, mankind began to look for something more permanent. Christianity came and deepened this desire after the immutable. Then it began to be perceived that there was a destiny to which all things were working in the designs of Providence. The traces of this idea, the first sign of a philosophy of history, are to be found in the works of St. Augustine, of Eusebius, and of Sulpicius Severus. The belief that there was a necessary course in human affairs ever working to promote the progress of the law of Christ appears in rude forms throughout the Middle Age, until at last, in the hands of Bossuet, it becomes a sublime epic.

The solution of the great problem of the world's history was accordingly found in Christianity itself. And even now, when the spirit of scepticism and analysis appears to have changed everything, we have no other historic belief. Only that which was particular has become general, that which could be touched with the finger has become impalpable, that which appeared in such a place, in such a century, has become the work of all creatures and of all ages.

Nothing is so misleading or so precarious as the mere facts of the history of humanity. What we want is to discover the eternal laws by which these facts move. If we know the supreme law of nations, and have laid hold of the ideal types of its various epochs, our knowledge of the history of humanity will be more real than any knowledge drawn from ephemeral contingencies and passing individualities, which we cannot recall nor retain for an instant.

II.

Such a science has been unfolded by two great masters, Vico[1] and Herder, representatives of the two methods which divide the world of thought.

Struck with the principle of the identical nature of all nations, Vico has gathered together the phenomena which are common to all of them at various periods of their duration, and removing

[1] Vico, the Neapolitan philosopher here referred to, died the very year in which Herder was born, 1744; and Edgar Quinet, the third in this line of historical philosophers, was born the very year in which Herder died, 1803.

from these phenomena all colour and individuality, he has constructed from their whole an abstract history, an ideal form which holds good in all time, reproducing itself among every people, without specially recalling any one of them.

That which is apparent to us of the succession of nations—their birth, development, greatness, fall—is only the expression of the relation of the world with this indestructible city. If every vestige of history should disappear from the earth, the imperishable annals of this city would exist in the fact of Providence manifesting itself on earth by the laws of human thought. In the system of this intelligible world, at all times essentially harmonious with itself, rest the ideas which give to the nations their forms and their manner of existence.

No two systems can be more opposed than those of Vico and Herder. The former takes human thought in its sublimest essence as the basis of the series of human actions; the latter begins at the lowest manifestations of material being.

Herder's plan is first of all to unfold the series of organisms which at last culminate in the blossoming of the flower of humanity. He shows how each step in each series is the preparation for the next, and how each series is linked together by intermediate beings. In this ever ascending scale of being every organism has its mission, and is never exhausted until it has developed the characteristics of its sphere. Nothing rests, nothing retrogrades, until at last, foreshadowed and announced on all sides, the summit is reached in man. At this point Herder's system divides into two worlds—the natural world, changing with the seasons, but ever the same; the civil world, in which man seeks to develop his being full of unexpected turns, the thread of which it seems vain to follow. Herder makes these two worlds to spring out of one another, or rather, he represents them as one and the same being. As multiplex man is governed by the same laws as individual man, so humanity in its civil career is governed by the same laws as those of nature. And as nature through countless modifications rises to the power of thought, so humanity through innumerable vicissitudes is ever tending towards a way of perfection. Thus between these two worlds there is not only correspondence in phenomena but unity in law.

Before he arrives at the world of history, Herder surveys the dwelling-place of man, demonstrating how admirably it was prepared to be the nursery of the different races who were to be organised upon it. With man on the scene, he proceeds to show how the natural faculties of humanity are evidence of the laws which will govern its history. In this light anatomy becomes an eloquent prophecy. These faculties had often before been

tabulated and explained; Herder's genius consists in making them the basis of history.

III.

Herder's system, however, does not fully resolve the problem of history. Conscientious as he is, he is compelled, against his will, to deviate from his own principles.

Man at first had but a confused notion of his own being, confounding it with that of the world around him. But the law under which he emerged from that state, as laid down by Herder, is one which, if admitted to be the sole law of human destiny, would seem to render movement impossible.

"Humanity is and was everywhere, according to circumstances of time and place, only that which it could be, and nothing but that which it could be."

Having bound humanity so tightly to the material organisation, Herder is forced to look for the impulsion which is the beginning of history in something outside both man and nature. He finds this impulsion in a primitive revelation, which, given in a certain place and time, has been scattered among all nations. Thus Herder teaches that there was a time when God met His child wandering and confused in the world of nature, and gave him a language and a religion, and this became his first impulsion in the way of civilisation.

But what follows? Directly the tradition of this first impulsion began to prove insufficient, then it became necessary that this Almighty power should return again to re-instruct the wanderer. And if this be the case, what becomes of the system of progressive forces that, without any foreign concurrence, could raise the rudest forms to the highest? After all these wonderful series of transformations, these sublime aptitudes, the world is shown to be powerless. It stops and calls for a power which neither comes from itself nor returns into itself. To imagine such a power interposing between the organic universe and the first acts of humanity is to divide it at once into two worlds: inert and progressive creation.

Here then I separate myself from Herder. Accepting the whole order of the facts, listening to the slow argument of the ages, it seems to me that all may be explained without mysteries. The difficulty as to where the first impulsion came from, recurs a thousand times and receives the same explanation. By ways not really dissimilar in principle, men commenced to break away from the bondage of the exterior universe, just as they did from the bondage of the law of the Middle Age. The heroism of Sir Thomas More and Lord

Russell was probably of a higher order than that of the man who, first separating himself from the blind movement of the external world, dared to face a future that was his alone; but it arose from the same kind of interior activity, an activity for which we have a name, and which we know very well is no solitary gift of heaven.

History, indeed, from beginning to end, is the drama of liberty, the protest of the human race against the world which enchains it, the triumph of the infinite over the finite, the freedom of the spirit, the reign of the soul. The moment liberty failed from the earth, history would cease to exist. Impelled by an invisible hand, humanity breaks its bonds and advances into new ways.

The infinite shut up in the bounds of the universe, is ever seeking to escape from it. Man, who has received the infinite, suffers as it were from a sort of madness; he is driven on by it, like a traveller hastening from city to city, far from his home, hardly knowing whither he is going. None can tell how this strange Odyssey will end, or when this Ulysses will first catch sight of his Ithaca.

Is there no correspondence in the sphere of human action to the immutability we see in things? Do the vicissitudes of history result from nothing but the caprice of human wills? The same stability will be seen to reign in the civil as in the physical world, when it is established that the action of human wills has its foundation in the very grounds of the universe; that it is, in reality, the most elevated result of it; that it was a condition of things that, at a certain epoch, a certain form of civilisation should be born, a certain movement of progression take place; that these different phenomèna are in relation with the entire domain of nature, and participate in its character. When this is done human action will present itself as a new kingdom, which has its harmonies, its contrasts, its determinate sphere; then it will be seen that the science of wills is analogous in its forms to the science of things, but of a far higher order.

History belongs so to man, that it seems a bold thing to put him in the second rank, and to give the supreme place to the universal thought of which he is only the docile expression. But really this not only intensifies the interest of history, but enables us to regard it and all things with a calm joy, conscious that there is a majestic order in its events, leading us to commit with confidence the few moments reserved for our individual lives to the care of that Being who has known how to weigh and balance centuries and empires.

Perhaps this way of regarding the past may seem to take

from it its life and to render it a cold abstraction. Strange, if it be so, that the man who has founded with such precision the organic laws of humanity has also been the first to commence the reform of history, in giving to each age its natural colour, its own special charm and individuality.

Among the movements which seem to break the historic unity of the ages, the influence of Christianity is the fact to which Herder especially attaches himself. Lessing, in his "Education of the Human Race," had developed a new idea concerning revelation. He took a middle path between orthodoxy and scepticism, holding that revelation was a perfectible instrument which God used to educate humanity. The truths revealed were at first presented under rude forms, but they enclosed Christianity, which gradually detached itself from them. But Christianity, he affirmed, was not the final term in revelation, for just as its doctrine had been implicitly contained in the law, so the gospel hides truths still more profound. Its dogmas will one day be transformed into rational verities.

Herder takes a stricter view; his whole genius is opposed to anything exceptional, and his precise knowledge enabled him to throw immense light on the progress and influence of revelation. His elevation of soul, his inspired tone, his tender spirit, the fascination of his language, now vehement, now reflective, always full of unction and tenderness, recall the way in which the Savoyard vicar would have written the history of Christianity. All our souvenirs seem to speak to us again; even legends and religious symbols receive in his hands a philosophic life.

It would, indeed, be impossible to find a book which embraces a vaster extent in the circle of experience, or one that is more marked by the elements of grandeur, majesty, and universality. It is an unexpected thing to meet with an author who penetrates so far into the laws of organism in order to discover in them the marvels of moral being, of conscience, and of immortality. In Herder we see combined the austere spirit of Lucretius, with inspirations like those of Plato.

In spite of the sensational basis upon which Herder begins, the development of his moral doctrines does not lead in the end to the egoism of Helvetius, to the despairing raillery of Voltaire, or even to Hutcheson's principle of utility, but rather conducts to an idea of duty more absolute than that of the philosopher of Königsberg. Placed between the scepticism of the eighteenth century and the school of Kant, he partly adopted the metaphysics of the former while rejecting its ethics, and loved the tendency of the latter while refuting its principle.

What then is the foundation of his doctrine? Idealism in

sensation, a kind of disguised pantheism. The character of this philosophy is to substitute presumptions for knowledge; to cause hope to take the place of certitude; absolute doubt, the place of hope. Explaining at first a certain number of inferior facts in a satisfactory manner, and having above all a theory which seems supported by an array of evidence, a theory which embracing the material world never leaves it, but declares itself opposed to all metaphysical abstractions, this philosophy has an appearance of modesty and circumspection. Making alliance with poetry, borrowing its colours from the most subtle forms, it advances into the field of unlimited deductions, seducing minds who worship inspiration rather than method. And further on, when the order of phenomena rises, then the foundations totter, the language becoming more and more poetical as the questions which have frightened humanity in all ages have to be met. In the face of these terrible abysses, brilliant efforts of the imagination are only a snare.

How is it that Herder did not feel the instability of his own philosophy? How is it that I can myself rest in these floating ideas, these undecided forms, many of which are obscure and others contradictory? Because under this moving surface there is a fixed point, an inviolable refuge,—the conscience of being, the sentiment of pure religion, universal as the spontaneous conviction of genius. Present everywhere in the depth and throughout the substance of the subject, this forms the philosophic *ego* which should have been its point of departure; by this we know and recognise it. Here we find the scientific element which sustains the whole work.

IV.

Let us take care not to lose the chain of the past, lest we should find ourselves wandering on the earth. There are many questions we want answered, questions which hover in the borderland of history and moral philosophy. How far do the memories of the species reflect themselves in the individual? How do such memories harmonise with his own impressions? What law do they impose on his personal activity?

He who would understand history must consent first of all to look into himself and become attentive to the movements of his own mind. He who truly does this, will discover buried there the whole series of the past ages. From the narrow home of his individual "I" he will thence be able to go forth by necessary consequences, through the course of empires and peoples to the hut of Evander, the tent of Jacob, even to the palm-tree of Zoroaster.

Nothing can equal the day in which, recognising the tie that united all the scattered images which seemed to float in duration, without order or result, I perceived, as from some lofty eminence, a nearly infinite number of beings, like myself, who had preceded me. I felt drawn to each of these, my brothers, as I thought of them treading the same earth and living under the same sun, passing through the same vicissitudes of sorrow and joy as I was. I knew not their names nor their faces, but I knew that whenever they had troubled themselves about their posterity, that they had unconsciously thought of me. As I lived in them, so I felt that they lived in me. For I discovered that, frail and circumscribed as I may be, had any form of humanity been wanting, I should have been other than I am. Old Chaldea, Phenicia, Babylon, Memphis, Judea, Egypt, Etruria, all have had a share in my education, and live in me.

Our individual life may seem circumscribed, but looked at as forming a part of the harmony of the ages, it has a force and a meaning we have perhaps little dreamt of. For the life of an individual, of a people, of the human race, are but three forms of the same being. The same laws govern them, and what is true of one is true of the other. Of this unity is born the harmonious beauty of history in its vastest proportions. We have, it is true, neither the longevity of nations nor their ancient traditions; but the man who, in his narrow sphere, pursues with constancy the ideal being within him, is equal in the eyes of the Eternal to the empire which, in its longest duration, manifests the sacred laws of reason and of liberty.

The instant a man makes the law of humanity the law of his being, at that instant he begins to live the true individual life, to enjoy the fulness of the Ego. He has his work traced out for him, he feels his importance in the order of things, he moves on, his power of sympathy ever increasing, he is never deceived in his object. If the present hour and the few objects it presents prove empty and flattering, he finds strength in the thought of the ages with which he is in relation. The individual arrived at this point cannot be separated from the humanity of which he has appropriated the law. That law concentrates itself in him, and he bears in himself the whole series of its future destinies. As long as this union continues he will be strong, powerful, invincible; he has rest and the supreme good.

From whence follows this result? The individual pursues his career to perfection more rapidly than humanity. What it takes ages to attain, he arrives at in a few years, it may be in a single day. But a time comes when he dies, and humanity still lives on, reaching stages of development beyond those given to the individual. Has the law of development ceased for the

individual? Is his tie with the race severed? Does one being go on alone while the other has ceased to be? No, infinite God! I cannot believe it. I conclude that, whilst the human race pursues on earth its career of perfection, the individual continues its parallel march in some place and in some form already prepared for it by Providence.

From the law of humanity let us pass to humanity itself. We ought to regard a being who appears thus tossed about by so many chances with deep religious respect. Only the Being of beings is without a history. Humanity is condemned to change, but that change is progress, and marks at once its weakness and its strength. What would it have been if, at its origin, it had possessed the empire it does to-day? What would it have done if it could have foreseen the long travail it has had to go through? By all within us that is still undecided and indeterminate, we are assured that the development of humanity is yet incomplete. These mysteries that now trouble us will become a source of new wishes, new moral truths, such as we no more dream of than did Sophocles of the love of Heloise or Zeno of the philosophy of St. Paul or of St. John. But these moral conquests have their foundations in the ages preceding them, nay, so deeply rooted is the future in the past that, were only one representative of our race to survive, he would recall a world that was no more, for nature has made each of the members of humanity the product and image of all.

Finally, I rejoice to find in the history of humanity the God of nature, and to see that He who clothed with gold the furze of the waste, and sprinkled with azure the wing of the humming-bird, has arrayed Babylon in glory, and adorned with rich apparel ancient Persepolis and Thebes with her hundred gates; that He who has caused the rivers to flow so abundantly, who has arranged with such art rocks, valleys, and desert places, and who has varied almost infinitely the attitude of plants, the voices of animals and the harmonies resulting therefrom, has with like wisdom distributed through the ages, generations and families, nations and tongues.

Every city appears in the day and under the form in which the world requires it. All forms are the expression of divine ideas, and produce a poetry which rises full of life from the harmonies of the ages. He who has listened to them for a single hour will find all other strains frivolous and perishing.

If ever this philosophy was needed, it is in the present day, when men seem on the one hand absorbed in covetousness, or given over on the other to cowardly indifference. Nothing is so assuring as the witness of the past ages; nothing so calming in the struggle, so strengthening, so productive of holy inexhaus-

tible joy, as to feel ourselves sheltered under the authority of the whole human race.

Let us not despond at finding ourselves dying and humanity making such slow progress. Without complaining of the heat and burden of the day, or troubling about our reward, let us work according to our strength to live and die in that place which the human race has confided to us.

CHAPTER II.

STRASBURG, HEIDELBERG. 1826–29.

"This sore combat lasted till Christian was almost quite spent. For you must know that by reason of his wounds, Christian must needs grow weaker and weaker."
—*Pilgrim's Progress.*

LITTLE did Edgar Quinet dream how soon his devotion to Herder would be rewarded. The translation introduced him to various persons of note, and gave him what he needed, an auditory to whom he could unfold his thoughts. One of these persons was M. de Gérando, a member of the Council of State, and the author of a work on morals. He treated the young philosopher with great generosity, helping him by advice, and giving him the free use of his library.

In the same month, May 1825, Herder brought him a still more important friend. The agent of the Strasburg publishing house sent Victor Cousin a sheet of the translation, and a day or two after introduced Quinet himself. Cousin was ten years older than Quinet, and was reputed the profoundest thinker and one of the greatest orators in France. He was an ardent liberal in politics, and the leader of the reaction against the sensualistic philosophy and literature prevalent during the eighteenth century. Plato was his model, and his doctrine the Stoic philosophy in its most elevated form. He was just rising to the zenith of his fame. Three years later he achieved one of the greatest triumphs in popularity ever obtained by any philosophic teacher in France since the days of Abelard: an audience of two thousand persons attended

Cousin's lectures on the history of philosophy in 1828. Perhaps this success was partly owing to his very enthusiastic manner, which, as it never failed him, would appear to have been quite natural.

At their first interview he squeezes Quinet's hand, and calls him his friend, his dear friend. "But, sir," says Quinet, "you have never heard of me before." Cousin replies: "Your two pages have taught me much. Two friends of Herder cannot be strangers to one another."

He meets him soon after in the street, and seizing him by both hands, Cousin exclaims: "We shall meet again very soon; shan't we?"

Quinet wrote home to his mother in enthusiastic terms concerning the grandeur and beauty of M. Cousin's character. The great eclectic philosopher returned the veneration of his young friend with an affection in which father, brother, teacher were all combined. He saw Quinet's genius at a glance. "You are made," he said, "to shine by imagination. Do not seek to fight against it, but rather to strengthen it. Be a great writer, as you are destined to be. Cultivate the art of uttering the truths of feeling. Interest, touch the heart, nourish eloquence, taking every care not to let your soul fade in dry studies, or in that false system in which I have so long wandered. Have an aim at once noble and severe; seek to be useful to men, good, consoling to all; do not connect your success with the present moment, with a party, or with some circumstance of changing fashion, but with the eternal wants of your heart. You will be of immense service to your country. You are happy in having a star! Follow it, without ever turning aside. Let all your thoughts lead you to it, by day or night. Ruin yourself for it; you will leave a name, I assure you."

It was at Victor Cousin's house, one morning in the spring of 1825, that Quinet first met the man who he describes as "the brother of his heart and mind"—Jules Michelet. Of this friendship, which lasted nearly half a

century, Quinet has left the following singular record: "From the first instant we knew each other, separate or together, we have never ceased at the same moment to think, believe, and often to imagine the same things without its having been necessary to speak to each other."

Michelet was born in Paris, towards the close of the Revolution. His birthplace was a church; his father a printer, working his press within its walls. Although very poor, the Michelets refused to sacrifice their son's future to domestic wants. He went to the *Lycée Charlemagne*, helping between school-hours at the press. In after-years he recalled his mother's sacrifices with emotion, the more profound because she never lived to see his success, but died in a time of poverty so dire that they could not even preserve her grave.

Mythology and the "Imitation of Jesus Christ" gave Michelet his first thoughts of God. In the latter book God seemed to be calling him as his Father. He became a teacher, and must have worked very hard, for at the age of twenty-three he was made additional professor in the *Collége Charlemagne*. Then he began to write some elementary works on history, and at the time he made the acquaintance of Quinet he had just translated the "Science Nouvelle" of Vico. It is to this very work that Quinet refers in his Introduction to Herder, as having the same object as the "Philosophy of the History of Humanity," but seeking it from a different point of view. Each of these ardent young thinkers had imagined himself alone, neither of them had ever thought that a fellow-mind was being prepared by a totally different experience to unite with his own, so that when the moment came for action he would find his companion in labour, who with him would unfurl the banner of God and the conscience, and in those sacred names go forth to regenerate history. He sent them forth two by two; is not this constantly the method of Providence? Rarely is a man found strong enough to do a great moral work alone.

Michelet would bring from Vico ideas wanting in Herder, or only there in an indefinite form. Vico taught that the Religious Sentiment was the producer and conservator of society; the idea of God fermenting in men's minds produced and sustained all its different forms; the various ways in which they conceived that idea determining the peculiar nature of their social and political institutions. A Divine Providence working throughout universal history upon a plan—this appears to be the cardinal thought of Vico's historical philosophy. How these great ideas fructified in the mind of Michelet's new friend we shall see hereafter.

In September 1826 Quinet went to Strasburg, that he might be near his publishers while completing his translation of Herder. He stopped there until December, and then, after a few days spent at Colmar, went on to Heidelberg towards the close of the year 1826.

Quinet's objects in going to Heidelberg were to complete his studies in Herder, and to make himself better acquainted with German literature. He was convinced that the time had come for disseminating in France the new ideas which that literature had so prolifically developed. Meanwhile it was an advantage to him to review on German soil, and in daily contact with German *literati*, his translation of Herder's "Philosophy of History," and his "Introduction to its Study." He published a further "Essay on the Works of Herder," and began some original efforts of his own.

It is clear from this essay, as it is from the "Introduction," that Quinet was no passive disciple of Herder. He could not accept as sufficient a view which represented the destiny of humanity as resulting from the operation of external causes, all converging to a given end, even though those causes were all providential and veiled a power that worked for righteousness. Quinet saw another power at work from the beginning, a power innate in man, which he called the human conscience, or

moral personality. This power, which works towards a realisation of the individual and his personal relation to God, he regards as having been at first feeble, and so overwhelmed by external nature as to attribute to it that which was really its own voice. It then sought to realise itself in empires and in cities. Empires and cities fell, and men were left individuals unsustained by the social conscience. Then Christianity came and revealed to them the full meaning of their moral personality, their responsibility towards God. The human conscience, having made a great step, recommenced on a higher platform the same process as before. The individual conscience became merged in the Catholic Church, as it was at first in nature. And so, as before, it attained strength in narrowing its base, and, passing through various forms of church life, it again finds itself a unit, compelled to assert its independence of all superimposed dogma.

Another difficulty which Quinet had found in Herder's "Philosophy of History," and to which he returns in his "Essay on his Works," published in May 1827, about four or five months after his arrival in Heidelberg, is the incompleteness of Herder's solution of the beginnings of human things.

"How," he asked, "can we reconcile man existing for ages in a condition next door to a beast, living in darkness in some cavern, or on his bed of reeds, with no voice, no memory, no desire; with the succeeding state, in which without appreciable interval having elapsed, of which we are able to discover the slightest trace, we find him lost in rapture at the infinite, which has shone out over the whole east? Who has given the being that we just now saw slumbering in imbecility these vast gods, of which after so many thousands of years my thought can scarcely measure the immensity?"

Herder's answer to this difficulty Quinet found in another of his works—"The Primitive Archives of the Human Race." Man is there represented as at first

existing with all the rest of creation in a torpid state. At last the Spirit of Life appears, and God causes man to listen to the language of the universe. His voice makes itself heard by the organ of Nature. The first ray of Light is the first Revelation. As in the deserts of Egypt the statue of Memnon resounds at the first moment of daybreak, so the thought of man was struck and moved by the apparition of the visible world answering to it by a sudden harmony of symbols and ideas, worships and images, the faithful echo of its God.

"I do not know," says Quinet, "what name to give to this psychology, which discovers the entire world, space, and boundless duration, hidden and enclosed under each of the primitive perceptions of the human race. The external world and the human heart act and react on one another."

But Herder, he thinks, is too prone to attribute all to the influence of visible nature, not sufficiently regarding another object on which Humanity fixes its gaze, that is—Itself.

In the course of this essay, Quinet gives his view of Revelation, and of the way in which it should be studied:—

"Nature, reason, grace, scriptures, revelation; how much these words have been abused. If they are gifts of the same God, they are probably far from excluding, nay, rather contain one another. To nature you oppose the letter, but nature is a vast book, which existed before anything was graven either on stone or bronze; and can tradition be anything else than a commentary on these first archives? If, taking a broad view of revelation, we consider it as the tutor of human reason, we do not thereby intend that endless quibbling by which reason is overturned in order to found on reason some mystical tree without sap or root. On the contrary, the first rule of the Scriptures is to conform themselves, as a mother does her language, to the intelligence of all. Revelation will emanate from on high, it will be just and true, only as far as it shall be promptly and completely comprehended, not by heaven but by earth, by man as he is to-day. If his faculties develop or vary, belief will follow these changes, will increase or decay with the

public reason. Whatever humanity can see at each epoch of its life, religion will see the same, but not a ray more. A power truly incarnate from its very origin, it will develop itself throughout the ages, with every form of human existence — speaking, seeing, hearing, by the popular mouth, eyes, ears, without ever producing anything which is not necessarily born of its time; it is this exact relation which will constitute its beauty, its verity, its divine character. The more the revelation is conformable to each age of the human race, the more will it be filled with a heavenly virtue.

"If such be the nature of things, it is clear that the true method of its study is not in its absolute type—doctrine, but in its progressive movement—history. It must be studied as it has appeared in history down to the present time. Nothing will have been accomplished if the examination stops at the actual state of thought; it must be carried again and again from Moses to the captivity, from the prophet of the Jordan to the God-man, without forgetting the times that have followed. Thus every question of theology resolves itself into a question of history; we can only really understand dogmas by a comparative study of languages and popular traditions."

After all the enlargement of mind, all the elevation of spirit, Quinet had obtained from the study of Herder, it is evident that he finds his master's conclusions very unsatisfactory. Notwithstanding the charm of Herder's Christian writings, which Quinet says are penetrating and go straight to the heart; notwithstanding his religious elevation and the calm serenity of his soul, Herder was a pantheist, and tended to represent living nature as God. Here, then, Quinet emphatically separates himself from Herder.

He is evidently beginning to feel the foundations tottering beneath his feet, so that he is even casting about for arguments on the being of God. The very vividness of Herder's reproduction of past ages has made him feel all the more their transitoriness; empires, states, peoples, religions, have gone, and the place thereof knoweth them no more for ever. On what can he rest that is permanent, that will not fail? Under the ever-changing forms of nature he sees a continuity, a permanence, in the

substance of things. In the concurrence of so many uncertain and floating things he sees irresistible proof of a first cause. In the transitory perishable character of all things he sees the necessity of admitting that the Supreme Being is above all things, different from them all.

While at Strasburg during the last three months of the previous year, he had passed through a time of great depression. Weakened, no doubt, by his efforts over Herder, he had fallen ill of a fever during the first week of his arrival. He had to keep his bed for six weeks, and though he writes to tell his mother that he is full of courage and audacity, he admits that he has had much anguish of heart. It was not the loneliness of a sick bed in a strange city, for his Strasburg friends proved all he could desire. One especially, a young minister named Cuvier, aroused Quinet's admiration by his lively faith in Providence and great serenity of mind. It was rather due to a sight of the shadow feared by the Christian soul, the apparition of the fiend of doubt, the dark herald of the valley of the shadow of death, through which he instinctively felt his path henceforth lay. He thus mysteriously refers to the struggle:—

"The heartrending violence of my troubles being appeased, I feel, after horrible fatigue, the first impression of a repose of soul which is not without sweetness. It seems as if I had had a frightful dream. The sadness that remains is changing into strength and resignation.

"All that unhappiness can teach, I know. But it is the sadness of the human condition that I see as much as my own; it is the powerlessness of terrestrial things that finally strikes me. This first effort to tear myself from myself has brought me a sort of calm and interior greatness.

"With this I know well the old life is finished for ever; that no time, no season, will ever bring back that which has been; that it is death that stands between it and me; that we shall live on without meeting again; and that when I have left it on the way and given it a flower, we shall each go our own way, without again finding any trace one of the other. Thought will remain faithful to a thought, but we are no more of this world. Such is the truth."

In this state of mind he arrived at Heidelberg. He had the best introductions, and the Germans received him with open arms. He became intimate with most of the professors, but the principal friend that he made was the philologist Creuzer, a man many years his senior, since he had occupied the chair of philology almost as long as Quinet had been in the world, continuing to hold it down to 1848, fourty-four years in all. For neither men nor things were given to change in the University of Heidelberg. In the Middle Ages it had obtained a republican constitution, and through all the generations since its members had carefully maintained the good laws of their forefathers. Thus at Heidelberg liberty and stability, order and equity, seemed to be combined, and all to flourish together within the reposeful atmosphere of learning and natural beauty.

The sensitive and poetic soul of Edgar Quinet very soon felt the charm of the place. "This," he exclaimed, "is the country for the soul! Here I find a peace that I have never known elsewhere. Nowhere have I found it so easy to concentrate my powers, to gather up my strength." In the society of his friend Creuzer he experienced much delight. He found in him a mixture of prodigious learning, with the imagination and poetry of Schiller, of whom he had been the friend and pupil. Creuzer's specialty was ancient mythology, which he treated as a great system of symbolism. "For how much," exclaims Quinet, "have I to thank Creuzer in a science so great, so unlimited, so unknown as yet!"

There was a simplicity and a sincerity about society at Heidelberg which contrasted agreeably with French society, and especially with that in which he had spent the winter two years earlier. His pure, melancholy, enthusiastic nature made him everywhere a favourite in female society. The German ladies visited him, and he them; they taught him to waltz, he in return taught them French songs. The little social and domestic fêtes

pleased him much. On his birthday, with much ceremony a crown of ivy is presented to him by his landlady, her daughter, and the servant. Accustomed as he was to cast a halo of poetry around all that pleased him, he recognised among these German girls Marguerite, Clara, Mignon; and if one was specially pale, then he likened her to the Leonora of Burger's ballad. He even begins to pity his countrywomen.

"Without any interest in public affairs, without religious belief, oppressed by the laws, by ignorance, worn out by the sight of things and of times which even enervate men, what will become of them?"

Edgar Quinet was fond of horse-riding. One of his first desires when he began to earn money was to buy a horse, and it was his daily amusement at Heidelberg to go to the riding-school and learn the art of horsemanship. The point to arrive at was to be able to ride with or without stirrups, and even without bridle, and so to attain perfect mastery over any horse that you could without moving legs or arms or body make him do what you would. So indefatigable was Quinet in this pursuit, that he thought he must have mounted every horse in the duchy of Baden. Certainly it was a charming life—days well spent in study, evenings in rambles over the mountains or along the valleys, making discoveries, or reading poetry, or joining in choral singing. In a walk he made into the Odenwald he speaks of watching the sun set behind its dark lines of fir, and how the scene recalled to his imagination the "Germania" of Tacitus.

In the autumn of 1827 he spent a few days going up the Rhine, his object being to visit Niebuhr and A. Schlegel. He was evidently compelled by want of means to press on rapidly, but the weather favoured his journey, the sun gilding the crests of the ruined castles of the Rhine, and making more perfect their deep shadows on its waters, while the journey finished in the light of a September

moon. He saw everything with the eyes of the poet and the historian. "All the history of bygone ages," he wrote to his mother, "seems reflected in the azure of that beautiful river. . . . I seem to understand much better the epic times of Germany since I have seen the Rhine."

In the summer of the next year he met Tieck. Their discourse was Elysian in its nature and interminableness; from the noon of one day until four o'clock the next morning did this unrivalled dialogue continue, no doubt amidst clouds of smoke and some needful libations of Rhenish wine. Of course his enthusiasm for the brilliant German was great, and he cannot avoid contrasting his inexhaustible and audacious spirit with the pedantic stiffness of the French academicians. He heard Tieck read Shakespeare's "Julius Cæsar," and was struck with the way in which he brought out the unity of the poem, giving his hearers the idea of a great epic in which the whole world is struggling, but which all tended to one supreme thought. He was astonished at the southern ardour the German threw into his reading, and especially noted how he excelled in making the common people speak. Tieck appeared to him to combine Lessing and Talma.

Quinet now plunged deeper and deeper every day into the study of the new ideas then flooding Germany, and determined to make himself their interpreter in France. He studied German philosophy, literature, art, from morning till night, and yet found time for compositions of his own. He had in hand "A Theory of History: its Relation with Nature, Morality, and Art;" a treatise on "Civil Courage," and another entitled "Considerations on the Philosophy of Schelling and on the Development of the Arts and Sciences in Germany during the previous twenty years."

In 1828 he published a short paper "On the Origin of the Gods." As the "Tablettes du Juif Errant" fore-

shadowed "Ahasuerus," this little work foreshadows the "Génie des Religions." The influence of the thought of his friend, the philologist Creuzer, is very distinctly marked. It is divided into two parts: I. How the Gods are formed. II. How the Gods are transformed by poetry. Its leading ideas are as follows:—

I.

Man completes the universe, and is its interpreter. History is the gradual revelation of the universal life, each civilisation being one of its thoughts. The new-born universe was reflected in the first societies; the link which thus united nature and history was mythology. Mythology symbolised nature, history realised mythology. History fell into obscurity; empires passed away; mythology remained, growing regularly, like some organised being. On the human side was sensation, spontaneity, reflection; on the divine, nature, mythology, history,—the three corresponding terms forming the three progressive stages of the universal psychology. Thus nature contains all mythology, as mythology contains all history, and the entire course of the civil world is only a series of symbols which the Eternal evokes from His bosom. These symbols do not destroy each other; the power of an interior thought of an age or an empire not unfrequently discovers itself when the age or empire has passed away. Thus the universal mythology develops, passing through stages which correspond to the vegetable, animal, human worlds. When, from the bosom of the races, it shall descend at last into the individual conscience, its career will be accomplished.

Mankind did not begin either with polytheism or monotheism. Vast and confused, its intuitions were capable of both ideas, but tended to pantheism as the first form. Only a people isolated and inimical to the rest of the world could manifest the idea of unity. The others, just in the degree they came in contact with their fellow-nations, enlarged and developed their religions. Thus the religions acted and reacted on each other, the whole growing and developing, so that the ancient mythology may be called the symbol of the universal life. This symbol reflected and personified Eternity and Time, Nature and Man.

Finally, as a race forms itself and overthrows others, it becomes to itself an object of astonishment and adoration. A sort of fabulous history grows up, the ideal growing out of the real, the god out of the people.

And thus, while all religions find a basis in the infinite made sacred in space and duration, a second formation of beliefs

marks the deification of force in time and in history. And these two epochs, instead of destroying one another, mutually interweave and become each other's strength and support. Thus, wherever we look, the antique religions express nothing but the similitude, we might almost say the ideal identity, of nature and history.

II.

To contemplate the epic poetry of nature, you must raise the veil that covers its surface, and underneath you will find a world that is always growing in silence. There, one after the other, the ages have constructed their tomb in the rock; they sleep without perishing in their beds of granite, of porphyry, of marble, and of clay. From this beauty deprived of life the epic idea of the universe rises with humanity to a beauty thoughtful and reflective. But between the mysterious thought of inorganic nature and the light shining forth from the great monuments of human language, comes an intermediate art which will have the character of both. Architecture continues the silent epic, commenced in the geologic formations of the globe. Lastly, from the bosom of the people rises that eternal river of poetry which, first reflecting the sacred hills of the Himalaya, flows on through Persia and Egypt and Judæa, through Greece and Scandinavia, until it reaches the forests of the Gauls, and listens to the distant horn of Roland; no hand is strong enough, no dyke high enough, to stop its progress.

Each national epic goes back in its germ to the first appearance of a race in the human species, and presents itself under different forms. And long before it was ever reduced to writing it had risen in song, flying from isle to isle, from forest to forest, from mountain to mountain. Formed thus out of the very life of a race, these poems are more true, more profound, than history. As nature has never yet been able to attain the perfection written in her own immutable laws, so the nations have never yet reached the ideal of their epics. Nevertheless, as it is the very life of nature to make ceaseless efforts to construct herself on these changeless truths, so the nations are ever making efforts to attain approximation to the formula of their epics. Each of these poems, representing a particular idea in humanity, is in itself but a fragment of the universal poem. Consequently they are always unfinished works, and each has for its explanation the one that follows it. Thus all the great poems of the world, from the "Mahabaratah" of India to the "Divina Commedia" of Dante, are one, and in their progress develop the ever enlarging ideal of humanity.

It was from contemplations so vast, so elevated, that this young poet drew comfort and hope. He who a short time before had sunk to the deepest despondency now rises again. "I am astonished," he says, "at the resources there are in the human heart, since it can be reborn in the very moment it seemed to die. Oh! if we could but trust a little more to time!"

CHAPTER III.

GRUNSTADT. 1827–1829.

"In feeling himself loved and in loving, Merlin became an enchanter."

"In his exile an old man gathered up the memories of his youth. Seen in the enchanting light of a far-off time, he idealised them; forgetting all that was terrestrial in the being that he had loved, he recalled only that which was immortal and divine."

Thus our author, a young man of twenty-four, unconsciously depicted a phrase in his own future. More than thirty years later, in "Merlin l'Enchanteur," he gave the world, under the thin veil of parabolic romance, some of his early experiences. Shall we say that they were less truthful than his previous relation of the same events in realistic language? On the contrary, they are a higher form of truth, the truth of the soul. Both shall be given, and the reader can make his selection, but if he is wise he will accept both, transfiguring the real in the ideal.

One fine morning in spring-time Merlin wandered over the solitary heights. On whichever side his eyes fell, he found himself surrounded by the same immense circle that a great magician had traced around him, a vast horizon of wastes and woods, of fields, and yellow corn, and blue mountain-tops. Here and there a tapering fir-tree stood out like a lance-head against the sky. Melancholy, desires unknown, aspirations towards far-off summits, drew from him a sigh; tired of pursuing the inaccessible horizon, he stopped by a spring; his tears fell drop by drop into the fountain. In pure fretfulness he cast a stone into it, fixing his eyes for hours on the undulations that succeeded each other upon the surface of the water.

"My life," said he, "is more vain than these circles that amuse me for a moment and then are lost for ever. Why am I here? Alas! I aspire to all and lay hold of nothing." . . . Overwhelmed by his isolation, he cried out with all his strength: "Am I alone in this immensity? Thou whom I call, where art thou?" A voice replied: "Where art thou?" Merlin started, but he soon perceived that it was merely the echo of his own voice. . . .

And he fell again into disconsolate meditation. Raising his eyes, however, towards the crest of the mountain covered with black firs, he saw, or believed he saw, a woman seated at the foot of a tree. She appeared radiant and plunged, like himself, into a continual reverie. Flocks of birds came out of the woods to peck from her hands. Her robe was green as the forest. Her forehead was white and polished as the stony heights washed by perpetual storms. Her eyes were of the colour of field violets.

. . . . . .

That evening Merlin returned pensive, his head bent. He knew that in the land where he had wandered there were dreams and phantoms; he would give no credit to them; however, spite of his determination, his soul was full at the same time of delight and alarm. He was like an Eolian harp, over one of whose chords some spirit had lightly swept. It resounded long after the instrument had been put back into its dark box under lock and key.

Not being able to sleep, he reflected a long time on his fortune: two triads just sketched out, some vague prophecies, many dreams; this was all he possessed. What betrothed would be content with that? He knew how the young girls in his own land esteemed wealth, not for the gold, but for the glitter. And the parents? Who would give him his daughter? . . .

. . . . . .

The next morning before daybreak Merlin was at the same spot near the same stone. . . . He raised his eyes towards the mountain, and great was his wonder when he saw on the same little hill, at the foot of the same pine, the same figure that he had seen the evening before.

It was neither an exhalation nor a phantom, but a young girl, whose existence was very real, since she had in her hand a golden comb, with which she quietly combed the long hair that streamed down to her feet, and which enveloped her as with the sparkling rays of the morning. When she had finished, she approached a fountain, and looking at herself in its waters, she gathered up her tresses and bound them round her forehead with an artless coquetry which redoubled her beauty. Then,

descending the hill, she came straight towards Merlin, whose astonishment increased.

"You called me yesterday," she said to him, "but would not wait. I come; what do you want with me?"

Merlin was too much amazed to speak. He dropped his eyes, then, raising them, he met a long, immense, peaceful gaze, such as I have seen, when hanging over the source of a glacier, its waters have appeared mirroring the Alpine sky. If he had dared to speak he would have cried out: I feel at once the pangs of birth and of death. At last he said, . . .

"You are then, as I, a child of the earth."

"Speak plainly," replied Vivian; "let us go and look at the flowers."

"You have not then fallen from the clouds, you are not a dream."

Vivian put her finger to her mouth, and said to him with severity—

"Leave the dreams of the night, they are cold and like death. See, the sun rises. The grasshoppers leap, the bees hum. Let us rejoice with the bee, with the insect, with the sun that shines upon us."

So saying, she took Merlin by the hand and conducted him by paths that she only knew in the depths of the woods. As they walked she taught him the history of the plants beneath their feet. Merlin picked some flowers, and would have given them. "What are you doing?" said she; "you do me harm. These are my sisters. When you tear them from their stalks you wound me." And she showed him a little drop of purple blood which shone on her cheek. What a loving heart! silently thought Merlin; he wished a thousand times to wash away that drop of blood with his tears.

The higher the sun rose the more dazzling became Vivian's beauty. The moment was reached when, under the splendour of its light, all the noise of earth grew still. The birds held their peace; even the flies that hang and dart in the sunshine imitated the silence.

Then Vivian began a hymn, the like of which neither Merlin nor any other man ever heard. The day passed in this enchantment. . . .

Reader, do you ask who is Vivian? Some maintain that she is the last daughter of the waters, the last of the druidesses; others say that she is a young girl more beautiful than your well-beloved.

So far the ideal, the parabolic; now the real, the matter-of-fact.

Some two or three months after Edgar Quinet's arrival in Heidelberg, he was present with his friend Creutzer at one of those musical gatherings so characteristic of Germany. The piece performed was Handel's "Samson." Quinet and the professor sat in a window listening to the music, and watching the sun set in the valley of the Neckar. But amidst this feast of nature and art a human loveliness attracted him. Among the young ladies present, one eclipsed them all, by her Raffaelesque figure, and a certain sweetly solemn air which breathed in all she said and did.

Ere long we find the ardent young Frenchman received as a beloved brother by the family of this same gentle girl. It was a patriarchal home. The father, Herr Moré, had been a Protestant minister, but then exercised the calling of a village notary. Like Oberlin, whose spirit he seems to have possessed, he was one of those sincere hearts who remain pure even in the most stormy times. A believer in the Revolution, he had been a citizen of the department of Mont Tonnerre, and the friend and host of General Desaix, the Bayard of the French Republic. After the reunion of the Rhenish provinces with Bavaria, Herr Moré still preserved his republican faith and his love for France. Edgar Quinet likened him to the Vicar of Wakefield. A large family of sons and daughters—there were nine or ten of the latter—filled his house, the mother presiding amongst them as an elder sister. The young lover's letters to his mother afford glimpses of their simple peaceful life. We see the younger children seated round a large table studying their lessons, while one with golden plaits plays the harp. Music was a necessity in a family whose existence was a continual hymn of joy and praise. All share the happiness of the lovers. Rarely do they go out alone. Their pleasures are pure and simple. We see them at a children's party where the little ones are in masks, or in the castle gardens watching the illuminations. On another

occasion they make an excursion in spring-time to the battlefields of Kaiserslautern in company with Minna's brother and sister, finishing the day by a walk along the pine woods, singing. Then come solemn seasons such as Pentecost, when Minna and her sister take the communion, the sight recalling to her lover a similar hour in his own experience. For Minna Moré had a deeply religious nature, and was a Christian of so primitive a temper that she would not have been out of place among that band of holy women who followed the Son of Man from Galilee to Calvary, and from Calvary to the tomb.

Caring supremely for the things of the soul, desiring only that which was possible and easy, anxiety had no place in the Moré household. The spirit that seems to have pervaded it was the joyful, trustful spirit of the Sermon on the Mount. It was the deep repose, the peace of soul, mirrored in her Madonna-like face, that made Minna Moré so attractive to the restless mind, the melancholy, sensitive soul, of Edgar Quinet. In it he found a spring of new life, so that he might well say he felt reborn at the very time he thought to die. It gave a fresh impetus to his genius.

. . . . . .

Merlin noticed that when Vivian smiled, all things smiled with her.

"Do you then command the universe?" he said.

"Assuredly. Why are you surprised? I love; with that word all is easy."

"But I love also," replied Merlin, turning pale. "I love, but not a blade of grass obeys me."

"You deceive yourself. Since we have wept together, you have the same power as I. Only try. Here is my ring; what do you wish?"

"That your name may be written on the skies," said Merlin, taking the vermilion ring.

"Well, look!"

At these words the heavens opened as a book, and they saw written there, by seven stars, in letters of gold, VIVIAN.

Thus Merlin, in feeling himself loved and in loving, became an enchanter. From that moment all that met his eyes was bewitched. The dew beneath his footsteps changed into diamonds. He had only to touch a thing, and it became immortal.

And this love, so pure and unworldly that it might have blossomed in the cottages of Nazareth and have wandered over the plain of Jezreel, while its espousals might fitly have been those of Cana in Galilee,—this love shared the common fate, and did not run smooth.

It was too idyllic even for the noble soul of Madame Quinet. Anxiety for her son's material prosperity, and perhaps a natural desire to shine in his reflected glory, made her deprecate so unworldly a match. There are proofs that she deeply pained him by her efforts to induce him, even after he had been two or three years engaged, to break it off and marry a rich wife; and that her persistent refusal to consent to his marriage caused him great misery.

As he had to struggle against his father in the vocation of his life, so now he had an infinitely more painful struggle against the mother he idolised. But it was a step further in that detachment from nature, another conquest of his personality, by which it was strengthened, elevated, and rendered more god-like. Bearing in mind the well-nigh unequalled unity of heart and soul which had existed between Quinet and his mother, and the strength of that forceful energetic will which had reigned supreme in his heart for more than a quarter of a century, the following letter must exalt our idea of his moral nature:—

"PARIS, *January* 1831.

"MY VERY DEAR MOTHER,—When the idea occurred to me to have a fortnight's fresh air away from here, I did not know of the affair of Charolles. . . . . Let us, however, talk reason. What a life is mine; solitary, full of infinite aspirations always increasing, and at last ending in utter abandonment and the desert, if I do not take care. In the midst of this life, and at

its saddest epoch, I have found a soul sad and profound as my own. She has consoled and healed me, remaining faithful to me in all my wanderings, absences, and the uncertain chances of my future. It is the only good that invites me to life. Is this, then, my *material destruction?*

"But which of these women, whom I could marry being rich, would care for me if I were poor? I do not wish for any of these women on sale.

"My dear mother, if you consider my situation, you will discover that it is Providence who has sent me her whose work it is to appease the storm of my life. Until she appeared, have I not always suffered, as it were, a long agony of heart? Is it not to her that I owe this commencement of harmony in my soul? When I think of passed torments, of that continual suffocation of heart which I experienced in early youth, it must be confessed that I owe, as it were, a second life to her who has saved me. My fate is then decided. And it is knowing it to be decided that delivers me from that trouble and horrible anguish of which I now have only the memory.

"If I were myself to destroy this assurance, if I myself broke the seal that I have placed on my heart, it would reopen with all the phantoms, all the vague griefs, all the infinite regrets, which are not dead, but only hushed to sleep. For no consideration in the world do I wish again that life of the wandering bird, darting about at the approach of the storm to seek its food in every quarter of the horizon. I cannot find better words to express my thought; but these suffice. There are natures one must put up with, since in going counter to them you destroy them. For good or ill (need it be regretted?) it is love, extinguishable love, that is the ground and condition of my life. I ought, then, to thank heaven for having found a similar being on earth.

"I need not say that I am not such a fool as to embark with a wife until I have the means of living. But it is precisely she who gives me courage to seek and to persist.

"There are days in which my desire to see her once again is so keen, that my heart is as heavy as a stone. But reason and duty keep me where I am.

"As long as my future is undecided, I have no taste for writing. However, sometimes my souvenirs and my ardent feelings oppress me so, that I do not know what prevents me from writing this romance poem that is already made within me.

"Adieu, my good mother! Write me a kinder letter. What does Dargaud intend to do?

"EDGAR QUINET."

But this was by no means the only way in which his love was tried; among the lesser tests to which it was put, was the following strange incident, which occurred while he was in Paris in 1830. He thus relates it in a letter to his mother:—

"You are aware that I had again met with the family —— of Colmar. I went there to listen to music; it was an advantage to me. Everybody liked me. I was invited for the opera, and for soirées when they occurred.

"The other day, at noon, the mother made a sign to me that she had something to say to me. I followed her into the room. There she informed me that she had an extraordinary avowal to make, but the esteem in which she held me rendered it possible. These are the very words she said to me: 'You must have seen that my eldest daughter has an inclination for you. Since she saw you so sad and so ill at Colmar, four years ago, she has not ceased to think of you. Seeing you again lately, this sentiment has gained fresh strength. See if you can and will marry her, or if any tie stands in the way.'

"Conceive my stupidity in not having divined this before! Flora was good, delightful to me, but I had never imagined her anything more to me. She has a very remarkable talent for painting and music. I saw her devoted to art, as I was myself to another study; the idea never entered my head that painting did not suffice her. She has made of me two portraits in chalk, perfectly like, of which I am going to send you one; the other she kept. All this never opened my eyes.

"The avowal of the mother took me so by surprise that I hid my face in my hands, and went out without saying anything; but I could not leave her long in doubt. I passed a very miserable night in trying to see if I had any fault to find with myself; happily it was clearer than light that no reproach could be made either by myself or others. I was afraid of the grief that I was going to cause. Towards eleven o'clock I went up, very moved, to Madame ——, whom I found alone. Then I briefly explained how I was touched by her confidence and the thought of her daughter; that if I had a choice to make it would assuredly be her, but that it was necessary not to think of it. And I said why.

"She received this declaration calmly; the father came in, and both did me justice, saying that they should always regret me; and I quitted them more troubled than they were themselves." . . .

Then he goes on to tell how the young lady's married

sister called upon him next day, and obstinately contended with him over his previous engagement, as if she supposed that he could set it aside. Finally, it was resolved that they should say to Flora that he had quitted Paris; but she could not be deceived, and they were obliged to inform her that there was an insurmountable obstacle.

"I cannot tell you," he continues, "how much this history has saddened me. To think that I should have troubled the future of a soul so harmonious, so naturally peaceable and reasonable, with so much elevation, and of an elevation so sensible. The thought which comforts me is that I have been what I ought, and that not a shadow rests on my conscience."

The engraving (Book V., chapter I.) is a copy of the very portrait referred to in this letter, and engraved for the first time for this work. Edgar Quinet has evidently just bloomed into manhood; high intelligence is in his brow, poetry in his eyes, humour and perceptiveness in the nose, and will in that firm though kindly mouth.

CHAPTER IV.

GREECE. 1829.

'A nation's sepulchre!"—*Childe Harold.*

"ALL things lose force and become inert for the man who has never passed the boundaries of his country." Thus writes Quinet to his mother, as he is about to cross the frontier into Germany; for even she who knew very well the value of travel, and was, moreover, unusually original in all her ideas, evidently felt the influence of social opinion at Charolles much scandalised by the young man's literary tastes and trip across the Channel. Regardless of the good opinion of the Charollais, he had even meditated a voyage to Brazil; a plan, however, the success of the "Herder" and his stay in Germany had quite set aside. Still the desire to travel possessed him, and he could not feel his education complete without it.

He had taken a deep interest in the War of Independence in Greece (1827), and being informed that it was intended at Paris to send out a commission of *savants* to the Morea, he offered himself as a member. He was chosen by the academy from among a hundred competitors, to go out in the capacity of philologist, attached to the department of history and antiquities.

He set sail in the "Cybele," a forty-gun frigate, from Toulon on a glorious morning early in February 1829. Nearly three weeks were spent in coasting the Medi-

terranean, and early in March the commission landed at Navarino.

Alarmed at the state of the country, the whole party, with the exception of Quinet, stopped at Modon. In company with two artillery officers he set off, passing by Coron, and going into Arcadia, as far as Megalopolis, everywhere well received by the Greek authorities. His military friends did not accompany him far, so he had to pursue his journey attended only by his own servant and some native guides.

From Megalopolis he penetrated into the Lycæus, the most curious and obscure part of the Peloponesus. The base of the mountain was covered with dense forests, through which he had to make his way to gain its heights. The singular adventures he met with in the effort may be related in his own words:—

"These woods have never been felled from all antiquity. Only cylinders of bark are to be seen here and there, trees fallen from old age, casting around them a phosphorescent light, while others appear black and burnt to the summit. Some shepherds, who had taken refuge in the gaps of their trunks, looked, in their grey cloaks, like statues in niches of ebony. Numberless flocks of wood pigeons flew out noiselessly, and we heard the tapping of the woodpecker on the tops of the oaks. Imagine stealthy little paths, looking as if they had been traced out by the steps of fauns; blocks of stone, which the traveller kept thinking must be the remains of some giant city; the noise of the winter leaves shivering in the wind like the prophetic oaks of Dodona; the only way for our horses being across gaps often a foot wide, the perpendicular edges of torrents below: imagine us penetrating through such a place in the midst of a violent storm which lit up the depth of the valleys with the thunderbolt of the Olympians. I was to make the acquaintance of Jupiter Lycæus amidst the roar of thunder. The sun, which since the morning had been very powerful, was covered with clouds, and the flashes succeeded each other so rapidly that the forest appeared on fire. In an instant a destructive hail covered all the heights with rime and frost. In trying to find shelter in a monk's roofless cell which we saw in a bypath, we uselessly went out of our way. But from thence we descried a village on a lower height.

"It was just evening when we reached Dervouny, a place of which I have never seen the name. It must, however, be near the spot where Pan found his pipes. At our approach the crying of children, the baying of dogs, and the banging of doors, clearly proved that the arrival of a traveller in this place was an event as unheard of as it was menacing. Dripping, I descended into a hovel, where a woman welcomed me, laughing. Her long black hair hung over her temples and came out from under her white scarf. On the floor of the cabin was seated the head of the family. His tall figure, his wild features, quite different to the Albanians; the broken indented line of his nose, the little round head on a long, loosely-knit body, made me think that I had before me the natural type of the Satyr of the Pelasgi; with his long cutlass shining from his waist, he seemed the spirit of the forests and wild retreats that I had just crossed.

"His hospitality was eager and prompt; the first mark that he gave me of it, was to lay hold of my pistols, to try them and to alter the charge. Whilst I dried myself before a great fire the setting sun lit up a group of women at the door who watched us intently. They wore a piece of cloth that descended to the knees and was tied round the loins with a cord. The upper part of their bodies was nearly naked. At the least movement on my part they ran away with fright. Several among them represented the form and timidity of Diana Venatrix, who was, in fact, the indigenous goddess of these mountains.

"At nightfall we divided our provisions for a common feast. I furnished the remainder of my olives, my host adding a gathering of wild herbs, which were boiled and served on a platter of beechwood. We picked up the food with our fingers. The whole feast was crowned with a bean-cake, kneaded in a few minutes and cooked on the ashes. A child, suspended from the roof in the trunk of a small tree dug out like a *pirogue*, was swung from one wall to the other, while his brother, standing in the midst of the room, said the prayer aloud, mingling the recitation with many genuflections, to which those present responded. This retired hut had not, however, escaped the Egyptians. Only a few days before they had had partial possession of it, and its inhabitants had not as yet cleared away the heaps of mud lying inside. We stretched ourselves pell-mell round the fire, after having covered ourselves with straw and rags. The wind blew and the rain trickled in to such an extent, that the Arcadian was obliged to warm up her child at one part of the night by holding it over the burning brands. And yet these are the valleys of Diana and Endymion."

Next day Quinet mounted to the Temple of Apollo, guided by the pope of one of the villages. As he reached the summit of the mountain he suddenly caught sight of the magnificent ruin, with thirty-one out of its forty-two original columns still intact; its grandeur immensely increased by its solitude amongst the rocks and in the neighbourhood of the region of snow, without trees, paths, or any human traces.

"A Greek temple is the pure and necessary form on which the world of antique civilisation was modelled: in the mind of the architect of humanity it was the ideal plan which he realised in the entire duration of the pagan world. Beauty, abstract and naked, it is to the movement and action of the life of nations what the sphere of Archimedes and the formulas of geometry are to the revolutions of nature and the irregular curve of the terrestrial globe."

He finds the rivers of Greece petty torrents compared with those of Western Europe; it is the perfect lines of its mountains, crowned with ruined temples, which give it such harmonious beauty.

In the neighbourhood of the Taygetus, a mountain in Laconia, he has some ugly adventures. After a twelve hours' ride, they found themselves at nightfall following the course of the river Eurotas. In the morning Quinet had been pitched into the bed of a river, where he had lain some time stupefied, and now in the twilight he had a second accident. His horse, which he only held by a cord tied round the lower jaw, dragged him into a little olive wood. A branch of a tree struck him in the middle, causing him to bruise himself on the saddle, and wounding him in the chest. They had been on the march since breakfast; no one knew where they were, and at sunset one of the guides refused to go any farther.

"An intensely dark night overtook us, coming down in torrents of rain. We quitted the Eurotas, and began to climb in the darkness a narrow ascent which plunged over escarpments almost perpendicular. Just as we reached the summit

there came a flash of lightning; the horse who carried the baggage recoiled a step. In another instant I saw him rearing; for a moment he stood erect above the precipice, but before I could lay hold of him the baggage overbalanced him; he had fallen to the bottom of the ravine."

Quinet's servant thought it was his master. But when the Greeks knew what had happened, one went into a fury, while the other fell on the ground in despair, crying out, "*Panagia, panagia!*" Streaming wet, the party groped their way to the ravine, and there found the horse lying stretched across a little brook. Happily the poor beast was not only alive, but had no bones broken, the baggage having acted as a sort of buffer.

The party then set out again in defile, the guide Yorghi leading the way, the fallen horse, dragged by its mane, bringing up the rear. Thus they pushed on in the darkness, fording torrent after torrent, sometimes up to their waists in water. The traveller thus describes the issue of this night's disasters:—

"We had already passed two streams of water, when a third, much larger, stopped us short. The ground was quite unsheltered, without so much as a tree; we could not bivouac there; it was necessary to disperse in every direction to look for a ford. It was then that I perceived a crowd of lights in motion, descending along the opposite hill. As they came near the stream, these lights turned towards the earth, ran along the bank, and then crossed the water at about twenty paces below me. You might have supposed them will-o'-the-wisps. Our surprise was great in drawing near to find a caravan of monks who each carried a torch. They lit us up during our passage, saluting us in Italian; and what was worth still more, told us where to find a mill a little farther on.

"Imagine us then gathering up anew our strength to seek this place of refuge. At last we reached it. I struck at the door. Our palichares cried out that some good Christians had lost their way, and could go no further. With this cry they mingled the name of Capo d'Istria. After several minutes the master of the mill opened the door; directly he saw us he would have closed it again in our faces, but before he could put up the bar we had penetrated into the interior. Through a place full of mules, oxen, and goats, I reached the remains of a fire, where

I laid myself down almost deprived of sense. A part of my body was frozen, and I felt a burning fever coming on. I have a confused remembrance of a group of women who rose from their mats at our arrival. My guides asked for wine, then milk, then water; one after the other all were refused. What I well remember is, that we had hardly been two minutes taking breath over the cinders before we were obliged to depart. When our hosts, who were about ten in number, saw that we intended to pass the night under their roof, they set about taking their guns down from the wall, and began to harass us with loud cries. The women said nothing. I determined to wait and see how this uproar would end, but before I knew it, my baggage had been put up again, and Yorghi dragged me from the middle of a deafening noise towards the *Agogiate*, who called us from outside. . . .

"On the other bank we found a causeway; twenty minutes later the noise of our horses' shoes, striking against heaps of broken bricks and stones, warned us that we were in the midst of a Greek city. Traces of walls thrown down, a long line of houses of rolling pebbles, whose ruins resembled the bed of a torrent, but not a living being, not a light, not a minaret, not a hovel standing. Our miserable caravan dragged on without knowing whither it was going, sometimes uttering a cry to which no one responded, the scene illuminated from time to time by a flash of lightning, followed immediately by darkness as black as that of Taygetus. How wretched did this country of Menelaus and of Helen appear to me then!"

The worn-out party finally found shelter in a wooden shed which was used as a khan. Figs and citrons were growing there, and before long the *Demogeronte*, with a party of his friends, came to offer his services.

"Blessed be that little old man!" exclaims the traveller. "Directly he knew of what nation I was, and what was my object, he came up. In his Frank jargon, he overwhelmed me with kind attentions, and gave himself no rest until I had accepted a lodging at his house. We climbed up a ladder into a wooden house. A ragout of rabbit and water-fowl was brought in on a plate."

Mistra was the name of the city where he was so hospitably received. From thence he went to Sparta, travelling on through Laconia into Argolis, which he crossed to visit Sicyon and Corinth. In Laconia he was

much struck with the depopulation among the animals. There were none of those noises that greet the ear on approaching ordinary towns. It was quite an unusual event to meet a bullock; as to asses or pigs, the last especially, they seemed quite extinct; a few flocks of goats and some little lean horses were all that remained. As to birds, bands of crows might be seen on the sites of camps, or where skeletons lay along the shore. But in the gulfs of Calamata, Corinth, and Epidaurus he scarcely ever saw a gull. In Argolide storks were so tame that they would often walk by the side of the labourers for ten steps or so. From the marshy flats of Arcadia flocks of wild ducks rose up with a noise like the booming of a windmill. On the mountain heights eagles and sparrow-hawks traced their monotonous circles round the basements of each acropolis, but no larks, sparrows, chaffinches, or any of the birds that animate the landscape, were to be seen. The olive forests seemed abandoned to scorpions and large snakes. He did not know what had become of the nightingale; the only voice which never ceased to haunt him was the screech-owl, with which was often mingled that of the jackal.

And this scarcity of the animal creation had its correlation in the human depopulation. The Psariotes, he found, had been reduced from 30,000 to 5,000. The women were even more diminished than the men. They had either been sent into slavery, or were dead of sickness and hunger. Old men and children were equally rare. Quinet noted an extraordinary number of children at the breast, but above that age scarcely any; either they had perished in the general misery, or, as he says, "it may be that what he heard was true, that grief and misery had struck the women with sterility." He especially noticed their hard, gloomy look. They had a constant habit of sighing, in some it had become a disease. They refused all comfort, and answered every remark with two words—"It's nothing." Those that were beau-

tiful seemed to have a contempt for their own beauty. All were in rags, half clothed, bending in the sun under heavy burdens, and seeking shelter from the rain in the dripping grottoes, or gathered round a fire eating wild herbs with their children. It seemed to him that there never had been a people who had descended nearer to death.

And yet he says:—

"There is no land where instruction is more eagerly sought after than in Greece. Towns are to be found where no other noise is heard but the buzzing of a school on the mutual or Lancasterian system. The children are seen seated in the open air under some pine branches. A pope standing in the midst of them keeps up the murmur, which the passers-by, sailors, soldiers, horsemen, all respect. You catch in the buzzing some extracts from the gospel. To this is added a little book of the *child's duties*, which, in its simplicity, gives a better idea of the land than anything I could say. According to this book, the obedient child must learn to read in order to become a good Christian, and in time a good patriot. He must salute others in putting his hand to his heart and bending his head a little. He must not play with pistols, poignards, sabres, or fire, a spark of which has burnt down great cities. He must suffer hunger and thirst without crying; he must not drink the tainted water that animals drink. If his hands are frozen, or his feet, or any part of his body, he must not approach the fire, but wash them in the snow.

"These are the lessons which children spell at three or four years of age. The difficulty at first is to preserve them alive. They are born among the ruins of ruins. Their A B C is that of a people of Klephtes."[1]

He had the greatest difficulty to find a lodging in Corinth, it was the most desolate city he saw in Greece. Passing Nemea, he traversed the mountains of Argolide, and embarking at Epidaurus, crossed to the island of Ægina. Making his way to the columns of Panhelleni, he caught sight of Athens. This city, still in the hands of the Turks, he courageously determined to see, so setting

[1] From κλεπτω, I steal; do a thing secretly.

sail in a Greek bark, he quitted Ægina one evening in May.

"The sun was setting to our left on the mountains of Epidaurus. Whilst the moon rose slowly above the heights of Ægina, the column of the Temple of Venus, enveloped in its beams, seemed like a lighthouse whose light had been extinguished by the storm. The wind had fallen, the sea was smooth and silent, our lateen sail hung to the mast. From time to time the noise of an oar was heard, the phosphorescent sea shone with a thousand sparkles, drops, waves of fire, dying out on both sides of the bark, the helm leaving after it a long trail of light. In a low voice a sailor commenced a song which scarcely rose above the murmur of the waves."

As he entered the harbour of the Piræus, the sun burst out between the Parthenon and the monument of Philopoppus. He pushed on to Athens with no other harm than a few curses from stray soldiers, and was permitted to enter Athens, making his peace with the Bey and the Bim-bachi by a present of a dozen bottles of rum. He was shown a field near the gardens of the Academy covered with human heads, which the latter official had cut off. Two French doctors that he met in Athens told him that they had witnessed the execution of a man, an old scribe, whom this Turkish official had first flayed alive and then hung up to a tree by iron hooks fastened in his breast. In this frightful condition he lived a whole week.

The whole neighbourhood looked like a desert. The sight of Athens in utter desolation made a deep impression on him. He considered his visit worth a whole life. He had spent between six and seven weeks in Greece, at a most dangerous time, without any escort; he had gone into the heart of the country, had seen many of the sad remains of the war—bones of slaughtered men, and forests burnt to the ground.

From Ægina he visited the Cyclades, and then embarking in a Greek corsair, set sail for Malta. Here the refusal of the British authorities to allow him to land,

suspecting infection, almost cost him his life. The little boat had to return to the vessel out at sea. It was night, and a storm arose. The tempest became so great that the sailors gave up rowing, and there was every fear that the boat would founder. Then the captain, who had been one of the most daring of the insurgents, rose suddenly, and blowing mysteriously over the waters, cried out, "See, my children, see how the demons fly away!" The rowers looked round in a dazed sort of manner, then seizing the oars, began again to struggle with the wind. In a few minutes the vessel they were seeking rose on the top of the waves like an apparition in the darkness, and the crew of the little boat were soon in safety.

On his return to Paris he was well received. The rest of the Commission had done so badly that the authors of it were glad to make the most of the only one who had shown any spirit. During his stay at Charolles with his mother he went to a large assembly of six hundred persons in company with Lamartine, where he had to read portions of his travels, while the poet recited some of his verses. In Paris, Victor Cousin, Benjamin Constant, Guizot, and Chateaubriand were all friendly to him, while among his companions we note not only Michelet, but Sainte-Beuve and Jules Janin. His book on "Modern Greece, and its Relations with Antiquity," was published October 1830. It was the first of a series of most original works upon various nationalities in Europe, in which he seeks to discover the secret of their peculiar genius, and the reasons of its development or decay.

CHAPTER V.

PARIS. 1830.

"Has all
Been undergone for this?"—*Paracelsus.*

"PARIS, RUE DE SORBONNE, *August* 1830.

"I HAVE been here, my very dear mother, since the day before yesterday, Sunday. I will not stop to tell you all I felt at the sight of the tricolour flag on the banks of the Rhine! But I saw clearly that the exile to which I had devoted the best part of my youth was ended. It is a fortunate thing that I have persevered in my detestation of the late reigning house.

"But what a vexation to have been absent from Paris at the end of July. I shall never be able to console myself that I did not march with the *faubourgs!* Who would ever have dreamt that all would be over in three days? It is a humiliation for our provinces. And then, to have no hope of ever meeting with a similar occasion!

"Cousin sent to me to come at once. But I was already in advance of him, and at Strasburg when the news spread in Germany. They are drunk with joy, and all the people on the banks of the Rhine are only waiting the signal to reunite themselves to France."

Thus wrote Edgar Quinet on the morrow of the Revolution of July 1830.

"Never," said Chateaubriand, in the Chamber of Peers, "was there a defence more just, more heroic, than that of the people of Paris. They did not rise against the law, but for the law; as long as the social pact was respected, the people remained peaceable. But when, after lies up to the last moment, the conspiracy of stupidity and hypocrisy suddenly broke out, when a Terror of the 'Chateau,' organised by eunuchs, believed

itself able to replace the Terror of the republic and the iron yoke of the empire, then this people armed itself with intelligence and courage. A whole century could not have ripened a people like these three suns which have just shone on France."

In all probability Edgar Quinet arrived in Paris about the time when this speech was delivered. It serves to show at what a white heat the enthusiasm must have been into which he entered, since it compelled such an utterance from the finest mind among the legitimists. A few ardent republicans were brooding in disappointment over the result of all their efforts, but the middle classes were generally delighted at a revolution which appeared so entirely their own. The liberal leaders in the schools and in the chambers were pleased, but they were even more surprised, and in trepidation lest anything should imperil the substantial advantage gained.

This moderation was a mistake; it demoralised the energies of the country aroused to an unwonted degree, and turned them into personal efforts for individual advantage. Quinet came up to Paris, ready to do anything for his country; in a short time, even he appears to be full of anxiety concerning the position he is to fill in the new order of things. In September he writes:—

"My very dear Mother,—I have been waiting to send you certain news; I have none yet. A public chair in one of the great departmental towns is proposed to me. But the idea does not please me much. It may be satisfactory to mention that some new acquaintances, such as M. de Corcelles (de la Seine), are of infinitely more use to me than the old ones, such as M. Cousin, who has lost his head in his new position."

"I have every chance of appointment as professor in the *École Normale*. I think that I have suffered enough under the Bourbons to have a right to enter the lists.

"Michelet has been placed by M. Guizot in the *Archives*, with nearly three thousand francs.

"I have seen M. Guizot, who has received me with a great deal of grace and friendliness. Although his drawing-room was full, he came up to me on entering, and took me to a sofa, where we talked for half an hour. He rapidly related his life since he saw me this winter, and the events of July; he came from Nîmes the very Tuesday. He spoke to me of my book. I could not have expected more kindness. His head, at least, is not turned. Benjamin Constant has also received me very well.

"Cousin proposes a professorship at Strasburg, but this university is governed by the most pitiful spirit. They make no great reform there. I should study zealously public affairs, for this is the time in which theory and action can harmonise, and I am sure that I should be perfect on this score. Cousin has displayed the most miserable character during the Revolution, especially in knowing how to avail himself of the favour he is in, and which has turned his head. He would serve me, however, if necessary. But, for my part, all is said and ended so far as he is concerned; so that it is not difficult to be perfectly calm and reasonable about him. The morrow of Wednesday, July 28, he was shut up in his room, crying out to his disciples that the course they were taking would make him lose his place. However, I had a presentiment of it, and I shall not be his dupe.

"On Saturday, the day of the great sitting of the deputies, I saw M. Guizot at the ministry. He was playing at billiards with his wife. A moment afterwards, in his drawing-room, in the midst of a number of people, he said aloud, speaking of me: 'I only wait for his book. When I wish to do anything for my friends it is necessary to have some ground with the public. Thus, your nomination will appear the morning of your publication.' In a week I can give my volume[1] to M. Guizot.

"The ministry ought to have fallen the day before yesterday; it is plastered up in order to wait until after the elections; this will give it, perhaps, three weeks.

"This is where we are. My respects to my father.

"EDGAR QUINET."

Guizot, Minister of Public Instruction in the government organised after the Revolution, was already the man to whom power was naturally falling; for, although never popular, his character and policy was the one which answered most completely to the governing influ-

[1] Modern Greece.

ences of the day. He was on the lookout for agents in whom he could trust, and this was probably the secret of the engaging familiarity of his first interview with Quinet after the Revolution; but he probably soon found that the young man was not flexible enough for his politics. What an idea it gives of the policy of this most austere of Protestants,—Edgar Quinet dropped as useless to France, Louis Veuillot engaged to write leaders in defence of his Government!

Quinet's charge against Cousin is corroborated by Louis Blanc, who, in his "Histoire de Dix Ans," describes the great philosopher as protesting during the progress of the Revolution, in the office of the "Globe," against the revolutionary character of the articles, and as saying that "France only wished the White Flag." This from such a man at such a time was terribly discouraging, for Cousin represented the most advanced ideas in philosophy. But the course he probably took from natural timidity, Guizot defended on principle. Social and political truth, he affirmed, was one thing, practical politics another. On the 9th of November 1830, speaking in the Chamber on the nature of the Revolution of July, he cynically admitted that the Republic was a form of government that reposed on noble principles, and raised noble sentiments and generous thoughts in the soul; he even went so far as to say that if it was to be established they were worthy to commence it, but that France was not republican, and that was enough. He respected theories because they were the work of human reason, he honoured passions because they played a great and fine part in humanity, but it was not by forces of this nature that governments were founded.

The apparent common sense of such a mode of arguing, couched as it always was in dogmatic and elevated language, appealed successfully to the sympathies of the citizen-king and the French burghesy; its true wisdom had to be tested by results. Meanwhile the soul of

Edgar Quinet revolted against this tendency to divorce practical life from religious, philosophic, and political truth. He was especially disgusted with what seemed to him the terrible fall of Cousin; and there can be little doubt that the pamphlet, "Philosophy in its Relations with Political History," which he published in the month Guizot made this speech, indicated his want of faith in the new *régime*, and had direct reference to his old patron.

It was a severe exposure of the weakness of the Eclectic philosophy in time of trial, as manifested by the manner in which its most brilliant exponent cast all his fine ideals to the winds for the sake of certain tangible results, subordinating his philosophy to political exigencies, rather than trying to lift popular politics to the ideal that he had so long been preaching. Faith, Quinet declared, faith in thought which had been aroused with so much difficulty, was anew destroyed, and the country, believing itself deceived, would fall back into the tumult of action. All those grand ideas Victor Cousin had for two years past enlarged upon with such eloquence—eternal laws, historic harmony, an infinite world visible to thought alone—all had proved empty words, and it would cost more effort to restore this spiritualistic philosophy to public confidence than to bring back the Bourbons.

"Let us speak out boldly," he says; "philosophy has abdicated its mission as soon as a revolution can occur without its taking part in it. When a philosophy thinks so cheaply of itself that it can barter its very principle and its high ambition on the first chance the world offers it, what respect can it have among a people who have only just given it toleration? After having seen a religion commit suicide, it remained for us to see a philosophy destroy itself in the same fashion; thus the contempt we have for dogmas will be extended to ideas, now that both bear the mark of a recent apostasy."

Cousin would have been more than mortal if after this he had not been inclined to take an acrid view of the

works of his dear friend. Nor were people slow in bringing Quinet news of Cousin's ill-will. In this very month he hears of a great dispute between the two Victors, Cousin and Hugo, in which, to his satisfaction, the latter praises his "Greece" to the skies, declaring it to be superior to Chateaubriand's "Itinéraire."

But Quinet was entirely out of his element in the worldly and intriguing atmosphere into which he had plunged. If he had had any practical knowledge of the world he might have saved himself much trouble and bitterness.

The Ministry of Public Instruction dazzled his eyes with all sorts of fine things. Would he like to be appointed professor of philosophy in some great city? Seven were named, he could have his choice. Or possibly he might like a sub-prefecture in Alsace. Such an *embarras des richesses* made it difficult to decide. He must consult Minna; he writes to her, inclining to the sub-prefecture, because it would give them an opportunity to interest themselves in moral reform. "They would thus have a serious and profound aim in life, and devote themselves as far as in them lay to the cause of the soul and to noble thoughts."

Meanwhile he did not understand that what the ministry required was some pledge that he meant to support its policy, or, at least, that he did not mean to oppose it. Had he sought his own interest this would have been obvious. He imagined that his intense devotion to his country, combined with his acknowledged abilities, would be enough. For some two or three months he fed on these illusions, finding them daily more and more worthless. M. Guizot's bitter words and compressed lips on one occasion showed that Quinet could not expect anything from the Ministry of Public Instruction if he was praised in opposition newspapers. But just then there was a change in the ministry, and his hopes revived. So he writes in November to his mother:—

"We have more chances than under the last ministry. I assure you that I am dismayed to think how little I care for these evanescent enjoyments, that I could now have cheaply if I wished. Beneath them all I only see you and Minna to whom my life is bound. If I were appointed soon, I should not have to wait much longer for her. Without her and without you, I do not know, indeed, how I could go on being interested in myself. With what eagerness I formerly desired the approbation or commendation of a strong man and a master in art. But now I have it, I would give all possible praises for the least thought of a heart that I love. So heaven has made me."

In December he writes:—

"It is irrevocably decreed that I shall be appointed to a chair of history; the Minister of Public Instruction has written to M. de Corcelles that I am about to receive my nomination. As soon as I have a sufficient shelter I shall not wait long to tell my father where I am. Prolonged solitude would be too sad. My good mother, how I desire to be happy for your sake! . . . the more so as I have perhaps deserved it."

Meanwhile he was not idle. About this time he published an article "On the Future of Religion" in the "Revue de Paris."

In January 1831 the Provisional Government of Belgium were proposing to found a faculty at Brussels, and to obtain the services of three or four French professors. Overtures were made to Quinet, and he was offered the chair of history. He was very much inclined to accept it. He thought that the Belgian Government attached a social and political plan to this object, and that therefore he would have a serious mission in undertaking it. However, as we hear no more, it is evident that it shared the fate of the vast majority of projects.

In the same month he commenced "Ahasuerus." When Jules Janin heard that he was engaged on a work of imagination, he supposed it a romance, and wished to join him, but Quinet refused, and that without giving him an idea of what it really would be.

At this time, too, he read the "Memoirs of Lord

Byron,"—"the only thing," he says, "that I have read with pleasure for a long time. The further Byron advances the more he gives up affectation. At the end he was really strong." Quinet wished much to see the Countess Guiccioli.

In the following May (1831) he is engaged with MM. Odillon Barrot, Cormenin, De Tracy, Victor Hugo, Lerminier, and Francis Corcelles, in discussing the foundation of a new journal. The result was the "Revue des Deux Mondes."

It was during this month that he unearthed a number of ancient manuscripts in the *Bibliothèque Royale.* They proved to be epic poems written in the Middle Ages, founded more or less on the Celtic traditions. While at Heidelberg in 1828, he was engaged in studying the traditions found in the popular epics of various nations, and he had prepared the necessary materials for a collection of the principal remains of the French heroic cycles when he was sent out to the Morea. On his return his attention was again directed to the subject, and his researches were rewarded by the discovery of these unnoticed treasures in the Royal Library.

He found there at least seventy most important manuscripts of romance epics, varying in length from twenty thousand to seventy thousand verses, and filling seventy volumes in folio. In his ardour he determined to devote himself to their study, and addressed a letter to the Government, calling upon it to publish these literary monuments of ancient France as a work of national importance. He was appointed to draw up a report, which he did, little dreaming of the tremendous storm it would raise.

His crime was twofold, he was a new man, and he did not follow the authorities; on the contrary, he dared to advance some extraordinary opinions of his own. He affirmed the Celtic basis of the poems of the Arthus; the priority of the metrical to the prose versions; the differ-

ence of the cycles to be marked by difference of metres; the importance of the epic monuments of Charlemagne and of the Round Table to the literary history of France, the origin of which, he contended, these romance epics proved to belong to the twelfth or even to the eleventh rather than to the fifteenth century.

These points, since confirmed and accepted, were so disputed that Quinet withdrew from the subject, but without giving up his intention of editing one of these poems himself. "Parceval" was the one he had chosen, and he intended to precede it by a work on the sources of Celtic traditions and their relation to the East and the North. He believed that these poems attach themselves by many links to the universal traditions of humanity, it being evident that they are a natural succession and development of the doctrines of the East. Every part, for instance, of the "Holy Graal" leads back incessantly to the history of the Hindoo, Persian, and Pelasgic religions.

The article, "Unpublished French Epics of the Twelfth Century," in vol. ix. of Quinet's Works, first appeared this year (1831) in De Lamennais' Journal, "L'Avenir." The impetus he gave to the study of the romance poetry in France met with but scant acknowledgment.

CHAPTER VI.

PARIS. 1831.

"A man may prophesy,
With a near aim, of the main chance of things
As yet not come to life; which in their seeds,
And weak beginnings, lie intreasured."
—*King Henry IV.*

On the evening of the third day of the Revolution of July, six young men might have been seen moving restlessly about a large hall, lighted by lamps, in the *Palais Royal.* Five of them were advanced republicans, brought there by the sixth, a very short gentleman with a big head, in order that the Duke of Orleans might feel the pulse of the republican party. The Lieutenant-General was far from punctual, and his visitors were getting exasperated, when all of a sudden he entered, smiling graciously. As he appeared not to know why they were there, one of the company pointed out the short gentleman as the person who had invited them. M. Thiers, for it was no other, looked a little embarrassed, and the speaker, turning on the Duke, said bluntly—

"To-morrow you will be king."

This remark was met by an incredulous look, and the Lieutenant-General said something about not aspiring to the throne.

"But supposing you become king," persisted his interrogator, "what is your opinion about the treaties of 1815? This is not a *liberal* revolution, it has been made in the streets, it is national. It is the sight of the

tricolour flag that has caused the people to rise, and it certainly would be easier to push Paris to the Rhine than to St. Cloud."

The Duke of Orleans answered that he was no partisan of the treaties of 1815, but it was of importance to keep within bounds in the presence of foreign powers, and that there were some sentiments it would not do to express too loudly.

After listening to a like oracular utterance on the abolition of the peerage, the young republicans retired, very dissatisfied, one of them going so far as to reply "Never" to the Duke's closing remark—

"You will come round to me, you will see!"

This story, which we have on the authority of Louis Blanc, is interesting, since it exhibits in its earliest manifestation the vital difference between Louis Philippe and the heart of France.

These young republicans represented a political principle which had become with them, and others like them, a religion. It had once raised France to the highest possible position in Europe. No nation in the modern world had ever approached her position under the Republic and the Empire. Far from being worn out, it had just produced results which even legitimists had been compelled to admit were unexceptionable.

On the other hand, neither Louis Philippe, nor the ministers he trusted, believed in the Revolution. Some of the earlier ones, as Lafitte and Dupont de l'Eure, might have sympathised with it, but none of them dreamt of affronting any foreign perils on its behalf. The great idea of their foreign policy was so to conciliate monarchical Europe as to get the revolutionary government of July not only admitted into the European concert, but into the confidence of the great powers. They argued that by so doing France would obtain repose for the development of her interior resources, and securely found her liberties. They boldly proclaimed the doctrine of

non-intervention. But in practice they only adhered to it so long as it suited their own interests. Thus they supported an armed attempt to revolutionise Spain because Ferdinand VII. had delayed recognition of the new king, withdrawing their countenance from the insurrection as soon as the threatened monarch gave the required guarantees. But where the great powers were concerned, they were most resolute in applying the doctrine, as in the case of Poland.

Thus the foreign policy of the governments that sprang out of the Revolution of July appears to have been dictated by no other principle than a short-sighted view of what was for the interest of Orleanist France. As M. Dupin axiomatically put it, "Every one at home, every one for himself."

The republicans maintained the revolutionary tradition in their clubs. There is no sign in Quinet's letters to show that he frequented these clubs, but there can be little doubt that he shared the opinions they upheld, and that he felt at every turn an increasing disgust for the government. Every ministry proved alike, for it was Louis Philippe himself who gave the keynote. He was the incarnation of the *juste-milieu* policy.

All this year (1831) Quinet is brooding over the course of events, giving vent from time to time to his indignation in the newspaper called the "National," and at last bringing out some political writings so directly opposed to the policy in favour among the French statesmen of the day, as completely to destroy all hope of any preferment from the government. His ideas were thoroughly original, but their most striking feature is their prescience; a prescience that in February 1848 caused him to be acclaimed as *the prophet* by the students of the College of France, and which was still more manifest after the Franco-German war.

In his first pamphlet, entitled "Germany and the Revolution," Quinet commenced by asserting that, as every country

had some point in which it was superior to all others, that in which France took the lead was the worship of Legal Right in human affairs. On the maintenance of this zeal for justice he considered that the moral unity of France depended; it was this gave a sense to her history and a soul to the country. Take it away and she would become contemptible to herself. This civilising force, this necessity for exterior influence, was the very life of France.

He complains, then, that on the morrow of a decided victory of this very principle, France should resign her position as the leader of civilisation in Europe, under the mistaken notion that she must do so to preserve her own liberties. If France thus proved recreant to her calling, Germany, he went on to show, would take her position.

Laughing scornfully at the antiquated notions of his countrymen concerning their Teutonic neighbours, Quinet told them of a Germany disgusted with dreamy metaphysics and literary cosmopolitanism, regarding France with unbounded bitterness,[1] and bent only on realising its own unity. The power designed by its own peculiar characteristics and the popular feeling of Germany to take the lead in this great movement was Prussia. Its despotism, he said, unites whatever is most practical and most ideal, and proves that the care of material interests can exist in connection with brilliant theorising and a transcendental philosophy. He thought it far more menacing than that of Austria, for it is not only in the government but in the people, in the manners and *parvenu* tone of the national spirit. Prussia never loses sight of the destinies of the German nations; at the

[1] In the latter days of July 1830 Stein was at Nassau. One day his friend Bodelschwingh went over to Ems, and returned about eight o'clock to Nassau. Stein was sitting under the chestnuts in his garden drinking coffee. As Bodelschwingh approached he called out, "What news?" The answer was, "Revolution in Paris." He was visibly moved, listened to all the details Bodelschwingh had been able to collect, and then said, "And so the wicked nation is to throw Europe into confusion a second time! Well, if they must and will break loose, all I can say is, I wish that they had waited till I was dead."

He afterwards writes:—

"In France the party struggles continue; people are tired already of the present ministry, and want one more democratic, a more democratic chamber, &c. It is a vain, heartless, selfish people; *irreligious—the devil take them!*"

In August of same year Niebuhr, writing to Stein, says:—

"A fearful future close at hand now threatens us. The monster is loose, and for the second time no power can bind it. The Revolution seems to me all the more irresistible now, because it is accomplished without enthusiasm, without utopias, as a mere matter of course, and no courage withstands it." —Seeley's "Life of Stein," vol. iii.

present time it invades them by its intelligence, later on it will, if it can, do so by force. All this restless, enterprising despotism wants is the man who clearly understands its destiny.

When this remarkable forecast was written and published Bismarck was only eighteen years of age, and it was twenty years before he had any idea of the part he was to play.

This prophecy about Prussia and its coming leader may seem easy enough now that the fulfilment is so complete as to make it difficult to imagine how Germany ever existed otherwise than it does; but its real political insight can only be measured when we recall that many years later one of the most experienced statesmen in Europe, and, as it happens, the very man who, above all others, represented the policy against which Quinet was contending, M. Guizot, thus wrote in reference to Prussia in that part of his "Mémoires" where he treats of these times, and refers to the foreign policy of the party he calls the Revolutionists:—

"Prussia, a nation still uncertain of its future, and probably the only power at present in Europe which really encourages an uneasy desire for aggrandisement, *can never expect to raise by herself any European question whatever. Her government* also, beset internally by liberal exactions, *is little inclined to encounter the risk of great enterprises,* and makes no external movement beyond what it considers indispensable to satisfy the national pride."[1]

Thus while Quinet, thirty-five years in advance, indicated with such precision the objects at which Prussia was aiming, the character she had formed, and would further develop, Guizot more than a quarter of a century after this warning was uttered, was still persisting in the opinion that Prussia was a power disinclined for great enterprises, and one that could never hope to take a commanding position in Europe.

[1] Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de mon temps par F. Guizot. Tom iv. p. 80. 1859.

Many other interesting things did Quinet say in this pamphlet upon the cause and effect of the great movement in Germany towards national unity.

The original destruction of that unity he traced to the Reformation; the causes that led to a revival of a desire for it, he declared to be two—the intellectual unity produced by the rise of a great national literature, and the moral unity aroused by the invasions under Napoleon; finally, he explained how its immediate effect was to cause indifference to everything that stood in the way of its realisation, even political liberty.

Yet in realising it political liberty would make conquests; noiselessly the work would go on, but none the less surely. Patiently and slowly would the German people work to sap each little monarchy until one after the other fell peaceably into the bosom of a state constitutional and national. The principal monarchy in Germany, the Austrian, was thus crumbling away, had been crumbling away ever since the sixteenth century; the ancient Germanic Diet was on the road to quiet dissolution. One fine morning it would be transformed into a constitutional representation of all the local sovereignties.[1]

How much, he exclaims, do the Germans owe to their Luther! He has made it unnecessary for them to have a Mirabeau, a Convention, a Terror, or a Robespierre. Tradition, monarchy, aristocracy, he has undermined them all, he has wounded them to the heart. And now, as religious discord produced political disunion, the coming political unity is foreshadowed in the aspirations of Lutheranism and Calvinism after ecclesiastical unity.

He notes that material interests are working in the same great cause, for everywhere the restrictions caused by the artificial frontiers are regarded with sullen anger, the people of Germany asking for nothing better than to be driven out of their natural slowness to demand the abolition of the customs, and a treaty of commercial union between the States, the immediate result of all such movements being to confer on Prussia the protectorate of the rest of Germany.

And we, he goes on to say, who are constituted to understand the power of ideas, we have allowed ourselves to imagine that this movement of intellect and genius would be an exception to the general rule, and would never be ambitious of passing from conscience to will, from will to action, and would never lust after social power and political force. And now, those ideas which we thought would remain unfathomable and incorporeal, prove to be just like

[1] This actually took place in 1848.

all those that have appeared before them, and rise up as the genius of a race of men, and that race ranged under the dictatorship of a people, not more enlightened than the rest of Germany, but more greedy, more ardent, more exacting, more used to business. Ever since the close of the Middle Age, the initiative in the German States has been passing from the south to the north, and the instrument the north is occupied in making is Prussia. Leave her alone, and she will press slowly on to the murder of the old kingdom of France.

The Treaty of Westphalia and the cession of Alsace and Lorraine is the wound at the bottom of all German projects and rancours, one of the complaints of the popular party being that no more territory was taken from France in 1815; that, to use their own words, "they did not keep the fox when they had caught it." Thus that which they dared not do in 1815 has now become the commonplace of their ambition.[1]

But it was not a mere commonplace patriotism that made Edgar Quinet think it so vital to France that she should preserve the Rhenish Provinces. Historically he found that they had always been used as the fortifications of the country that most brilliantly represented civilisation.

To resist then this power, thus organising itself in the north, he said in a second pamphlet, called "Warning to the Monarchy of July," France ought to entrench herself in her historical positions, and place herself at the head of the political system of Southern Europe; but instead of doing this, he complained that the whole policy of the Government of July, in Italy, in Greece, and above all towards Poland, had tended to give Germany material aid.

The French Revolution, he argued, just as the English, has its system of facts to accomplish: from its origin its natural bent has been to end, sooner or later, in the present form of the American Revolution. If the Orleanist Government had had the discernment to see this simple truth they would have been careful to associate the cause of constitutional liberty in France with the liberties of Europe. To attempt to detach France from the society in which she has her roots, to isolate her from those she has already led, and who still look to her, is to commit political suicide.

But who, he asks, will perish? Will it be France? No;

[1] See Professor Seeley's "Life of Stein," vol. iii. p. 344.

his patriotism forbids him to believe that the country will suffer more than a temporary depression, but upon the monarchy which has inaugurated this policy will come all its perils. For everything it loses abroad it will have to redeem at home: placed between two opposite forces, whatever it yields to one, it will have to yield to the other, until it only survives in the rival forces that it has enlarged and strengthened out of its own being.

To those who always supported a timid or a reactionary policy by appealing to the fear that a general war would result if the principles of the Revolution were pushed too far, he replies: Do not imagine a European war will follow even upon such a catastrophe as the downfall of the monarchy of 1830. All the possible causes of war which could arise out of the Revolution were taken up by Napoleon and exhausted.

Monarchy and democracy will be left in France to fight it out alone. The popular power will have no help from without, but neither will the royal power; and when the time comes for the latter to perish, Europe will not trouble herself to gather up its remains, even if she were allowed to do so. Finally, he asserts the democratic power, destined to supplant both monarchy and aristocracy, will consume itself in its turn, so that when all the facts of modern society are accomplished, and all its solutions worn out in the ruins of every form of government, the new order of which the world is in travail, and which no one can define, may establish itself.

The ardour of Edgar Quinet's patriotism and the entire unworldliness of his character will be apparent when it is remembered that all his hopes of marriage and settlement in life depended on his obtaining a professorship, an office entirely in the hands of the government. His friends tried to prevent him from thus compromising his future, his publisher going so far as to suppress the most dangerous passages in the pamphlets; but he went up to Paris expressly to see them re-inserted and printed. The result was that seven years elapsed before he received any appointment, and even then the king was annoyed.

But patriotism and disinterestedness do not explain the extraordinary fact that a young man of twenty-eight saw the political situation, not only of the moment,

but for fifty years to come, with an infinitely clearer vision than any statesman of the age. To have seen clearly half a century ago that Germany was the one enemy France had to fear; that Germany would never rest satisfied until she had recovered Alsace and Lorraine; that her one object was consolidation, unity, the concentration of her force under one leading power; that that power was not Austria, which was crumbling away, but Prussia; to have exactly traced the character Prussia has since developed, and to have said emphatically that all she wanted was the *man* who would know what she ought to do; and not only to unfold all this, but in the same year to reveal as distinctly the future of France, to have foretold in the very hour of its strength the downfall of the Orleans monarchy, and the coming of the republic of 1848, adding, what was contrary to the universal opinion, that when this revolution should occur, it would not be followed by a general war, but that Europe would leave the two principles of monarchy and democracy to fight it out in France, until democracy conquered, had its turn of power, to fail at last, like all previous forms, in order that the new order of things might be inaugurated;—to have seen all this clearly, and to have announced it in a manner so public, so thoroughly historic, must for ever establish Quinet as a prophet among the nations—a prophet in the real, the biblical sense.

What was the nature of this gift, how was it he possessed it, and, possessing it, how did he preserve it? The name he gave it was *philosophic intuition*, and he described it as the application of moral ideas to human affairs. What the moral ideas were which specially guided him in his study of history and of politics we may learn from his "Introduction to Herder," and from his "Genius of the Ancient Religions" and "Christianity and the French Revolution." In the first-named work they appear in germ and in their most abstract form: Moral liberty

working freely in a grand necessity of things; human wills controlling and directing the course of events, but themselves the subject of law; universal history mirrored in the individual soul; obedience to the law of humanity the condition of the full realisation of the individual life; a Supreme Will overruling all things—personal, free, all-wise. In the last two, really forming one work, the great moral ideas that formed Quinet's philosophy are applied to universal history. Though worked out in infinite detail, they have become simple, more easy to grasp than in the "Introduction to Herder," the great leading thought being that the moving forces in every nation are its ideas, and that its ideas spring out of its religion, that is, out of its relations with the Eternal.

It was this habit of never separating the material from the spiritual, the temporary from the eternal, the real from the ideal, that gave Quinet such marvellous insight, not only into the history of the past, but just as much into the practical politics of his own day. His greatness consists in showing in every page of his writings, and in his own personal history, that there can be no divorce between time and eternity, between politics and religion, between man and God. The statesman, the philosopher, the divine, who attempts to act or to teach independently of the plan of the universe, becomes a blind leader of the blind. That plan, Quinet evidently came to believe, was infinitely more simple than was supposed, and he who in any real degree grasps its idea, and lives in it, becomes thereby filled with the true prophetic spirit, understood in its highest, its biblical sense. "For," said Quinet, speaking of the Hebrew prophets, "all the thoughts of God, as well as His works, are enveloped in one supreme thought; and the men who have been the first to possess this idea, have really possessed the science of all times and of all forms to come." The application of these great moral ideas was, no doubt, aided in

Quinet's case by peculiarities of principles, temperament, experience ; all combined together to produce this philosophical intuition, or, as I have called it, prophetic insight. But, after all, is such insight only possible in the rarest cases? Was no one in Quinet's day gifted with an intellect as penetrating as his, with human sympathies as profound, with experiences as varied, with principles as noble and as pure? Doubtless there were many such, certainly Edgar Quinet thought he knew one. What prevented them, then, seeing historical and political truth as clearly as he did?

CHAPTER VII.

CERTINES. 1831–1832.

'At Hirsau, 'midst the ruins
There waved an elm-tree tall,
Its coronal of verdure
High o'er the convent-wall.

Its roots were deep emburied,
In cloister gray it grew,
And like a roof its arches
Spread in the azure blue.

I've seen it ofttimes glowing
In the first morning ray,
I've seen it still in sun-light,
Steeped was the vale in gray.

In Wittenberg's old cloister
There grew a tree as well,
Stretching giant boughs to heaven
Forth from its cloistered cell.

O beam of Light! thou piercest
The deepest, darkest night,
O soul below! thou strivest
Upward to air and light."

—*Uhland*, translated by W. C. SANDARS.

IN comparing the happiness of his old age with the sadness of his early life, Edgar Quinet conceived that the latter arose from his feeling himself too near the bounds of his intelligence; he felt oppressed by a certain void in his intellect, by the many difficulties he could not solve; his thought was still chaotic, his whole being far below that which it was to become. Out of this chaos he was unable to extricate himself. Overwhelmed at once by thick darkness and an overpowering desire for light, he questioned all things, but without having any answer,

until at last such an intolerable grief took possession of him that he could find no rest night or day.

"How could I enjoy anything?" he goes on to say. "I did not see, I did not hear. What was I to do then? I waited. But for what? A thing that never came, and which I don't know how to name. Wherever I was I felt homesick. 'For what home? you will say. For a home unknown, that I should never see, but which attracted me with an invincible attraction. People asked me, 'How is it you do not feel well here? Why do you go away?' I did not know what to reply, but I went."

This state of depression was overwhelming during the summer of 1831; accordingly he left Paris, and when "Germany and the Revolution" was published, he was at Certines. Here he stayed until the middle of January 1832. He had never seen Certines before during the winter. The grey forests all laden with hoar frost pleased him, and the repose of nature communicated itself to his soul. It was just the quiet that he wanted, for a poem was forming itself out of the agitations through which his mind was passing.

On quitting Certines he made a trip to Célignat, where he remained six days, going up into the mountains at all times, day and night. Some friends accompanied him to Nantua, spending some time on the road at the Grotto of Corveziat.

Towards the end of this month his father died. Sympathy between father and son does not appear to have at any time existed. Jerome Quinet's cold, satirical manner, and entire absorption in his own pursuits, had killed it in the bud. Though a man of the Revolution he had old-world notions concerning his own authority, leading him blindly to oppose the wishes of his son. Yet he was, as no one can doubt who looks at his expansive brow, a man of great intellect. On certain points, notably in his genius for mathematics, he was even superior to his son. Independent, proud,

and of stern republican principles, he was not likely to attain to honour under the Empire or the Restoration. Accordingly he lived in obscurity in Bourg, giving himself up to scientific research and to the drainage of the neighbouring marshes. His researches resulted in one important discovery. He interested himself very deeply in the deviations of the magnetic needle, and he came to the conclusion that its actual inclination would be found at zero on the Equator, five or six degrees of longitude east of Paris. He communicated his calculations to the Geographical Society of Paris, and to Rear-Admiral de Rossel, the President, begging that observations might be made on the coast of Guinea. His calculations, made in solitude, in an obscure town, were subsequently confirmed by actual observation; for Captain Sabine,[1] being at the island of St. Thomas, lying directly on the Equator at about five degrees eastern longitude, proved the truth of Jerome Quinet's calculation.

"Who would have thought," says his son, "that such ardour for discovery, joined to an original and penetrating spirit, would have ended without making him a name in science? However, he had none, so greatly were circumstances against him. His labours, continued for forty years with unequalled perseverance, must remain buried. All that can be drawn from them is a confirmation of the striking fact, that men gifted with the most unusual, the most energetic abilities, die unknown, for want of some favourable circumstance to bring them into notice. Isolated, they become entangled in ways where no one follows them. They make discoveries; but their discoveries remaining hidden, they draw no honour from them, better-placed men rediscover them and rise to fame. Some men always come too soon or too late for renown. On the other hand, how many fools attain an easy triumph! Talent, genius even, are only

[1] The Captain Sabine here referred to is, without doubt, the President of the Royal Society, Major-General Sir Edward Sabine. In his "Report on the Variations of the Magnetic Intensity," &c. (Lond. 1838), he gives a table of points at which the magnetic intensity is below zero, and those which came under his own observation are as follows:—St. Thomas, 0.25 lat., 6.45 long.—Sabine—1822, 0.931 intensity. There are two other points lower, but the difference is infinitesimal. The longitude here is from Greenwich.

promises. Destiny is needed; without that, everything must fail."

Thus Jerome Quinet was not among those chosen to be renowned on this planet. Being one day asked by his wife in what he thought would consist the future felicity of the just, he replied: "In a knowledge of the secrets of the universe." He began to obtain the reward he sought after, even in this life.

Jerome Quinet died, nominally at least, a Catholic, for Madamé Quinet had masses said at Certines for him in the usual way.

It was no doubt the decease of his father that kept Edgar Quinet in the neighbourhood of his early home during all the spring of 1832.

In the March of this same year another death occurred, one in which he must have felt a peculiar interest, since it was that of the greatest genius of the age in his own order of talent, one who, moreover, had honoured him by a few words of unsought praise. Goethe died on the 22d of this month, an old man of eighty-two. It would appear to have been this event that led Quinet to publish a paper in April on "German Art and Literature." It is divided into three parts.

In the first he brings out very forcibly the fact that the great age of German art and literature which the death of Goethe closed, had been one in which art manifested itself without conditions and without limits in a universe of its own construction. The littleness of human events, even those that make the most noise and seem almost terrific when placed in contrast to the world of thought, is powerfully brought out in this part of the paper.

Every one, he says, knows the portentous meaning of the date '89, of such names as Mirabeau, the Convention, Napoleon; yet the tremendous cataclysm that these names signify might as well not have happened, so little trace has it left on the contemporary literature of Germany. We might at least have supposed that in its great poets we should find a reflection of such times. But if we turn first of all to the man who conceived the great German epic, we find that while

Goethe has personified in the characters of Faust and Marguerite the two spirits ever at war in the bosom of his own people—extreme reflection and extreme ingenuousness—his poem only indicates by its singular character that something unheard of was going on in the world. But whether it was progress or fall, good or evil, are questions which do not trouble the poet. The serenity of Wieland and Herder is even greater; neither of them conveying the least impression of their time. They might just as well have written in the midst of oriental repose, where nothing is heard but the rustle of a palm leaf, or the wind sighing through the gate of a city in the Delta. And the same may be said of the critical works of the brothers Schlegel. The only one who shares the torment and fever of his epoch, who seems possessed by its ceaseless inquietude, is Schiller. His words make you feel that a storm is shaking the earth beneath his feet, he is the only one that betrays any terror; and his contemporaries, calm and serene, reproached him for it.

During the Convention there awoke, as it were from a sleep of ages in the enchanted castle of Barbarossa, one of the old mediæval minstrels. No one in reality could be more a stranger to the modern world than Tieck. He is the Ariel of poets, the frolicsome sprite who sports with himself and others, the true buffoon of the universe, the inheritor of Hans Sachs and the meister-sänger. And yet even in him German art did not reach its limit of separation from the contemporaneous world. The mysticism of Jean Paul Richter invented another earth, another heaven, a mingling of supernatural colours, creative dreams in which phantom worlds moved in the bosom of a night that never knows a dawn. From the height of this unknown firmament the angels stretch their white wings to hide and stifle the cries and distress of the real universe.

Here, then, is a literature in which not a single echo is found of political society. Such a degree of abstraction could be attained only by the German race. That race appeared about the same time as the gospel, to spiritualise the world. At each of its ages its mission has been to perpetuate the miracle of thought without form: a paganism without a victim, an epic without the wonderful, a Christianity without an altar, a law without a code, an art without a country.

In the second portion of the paper, the change from this calm repose to the bloodthirsty enthusiasm of the German war poetry is traced. Germany became discontented with leaders who were careless of mundane affairs, even when the soil of their country trembled with the shock of battles.

Even Goethe lost his popularity in his old age; many felt that his cosmopolitan genius had frost-bitten much sincere enthusiasm, and that he had given Germany the bitter gift of the knowledge of good and evil.

The change was visible in all things. The echoes of the human race, numerous and nameless in Mozart and Hadyn, give place in Weber and Spohr to a music peculiarly indigenous; while in painting the German school of the fourteenth century supplants the Greek art of Winckelmann and Goethe. The study of the frescoes of the cathedrals almost inaugurates a new religion. There is a rage for mediævalism. Everything must wear the forms of Albert Durer and Holbein.

A still greater change came over poetry, for under the impulsion of the new epoch it threw itself headlong into the fight. In 1814 and 1815, songs, terrible and bloody as the time, rained thick. The poets, with official mission to exalt the courage of the armies, resembled the ancient bards. What hymns charged with powder! what joyous ballads flamed forth in the grape-shot! what intrepid iambics rose erect, all blazing in the throat of the cannon! Then whistled the enchanted balls like spirits in the air; the sabres glittered in the sunlight as the sling of a Hartz fairy; the breasts of the horses smoked as a black wave of the Danube; the streamers of the lances bathed in the dew of the sun of Leipsic! Who can ever say this poetry wanted reality? Say rather it was intoxicated with too much of it. Itself a clarion in the midst of the battle, it was at the mercy of events. The ball that struck Koerner in the forehead just as he had finished his "Song of the Sword," gave art its baptism of fire.

Uhland is the Beranger of Germany. Although belonging to this epoch, there is a change in the character of his inspiration. The noise has vanished, the sword is wiped, the struggle finished; pious, he kneels in victory like the angel of Novalis at the bivouac; he celebrates the freedom of the soil, the joyful harvest that germinates in blood. His originality is consummate, for he veils the national pride in his soul under the humility of an ancient popular ballad; he conceals the sentiment of liberalism under the forms of the Middle Age. This so-called demagogue of 1819 is in reality a vassal of Rudolph, who sings his song under the wild plum and beneath the ruined castle of his lord. He is in poetry what Cornelius is in painting; they represent, each in his way, the actual state of Germany, hiding new sympathies and a destiny just beginning to unfold under venerable institutions and antiquated forms.

The third part is entirely devoted to a name little known, as Quinet says, in France, and certainly still less so in England,

but belonging to one whom very diverse thinkers agree in regarding as a Titanic genius. The mission of Goerres, according to Quinet, has been to arouse this great impassive Germany, just as a toreador excites the bull in order to render him furious for the fight. Goerres he describes as at once the apostle and martyr of pantheism. Jacobin, absolutist, priest, demagogue, papist, ultramontane, patriot, he wears out in his soul all social and cosmopolite passions as others do individual ones. No man in his country has ever suffered more in the name of liberty.

To his heroic imagination, the movement of the invasion seemed as the signal of a new era in the human race. But when he found it brought forth only the prosaic plagiarism of constitutional monarchy, with so many ephemeral sovereignties, he repudiated these half liberties, and threw down the glove to burgher conquests that he thought impeded and turned aside the true mission of the country.

In order to bring about the unity of the German races, he urged them anew into history. But what should be the tie that links all these peoples and tongues into one body? A religious principle could alone effect the work. Goerres believed that he found that principle in a Catholicism renewed at the source of the traditions of the human race. Henceforth he declared war against the present. He attacked the Reformation which had divided the people, the Liberalism which completed the Reformation. He conceived for the profit of Germany a revolutionary papacy, which, seated on the body of Austria, should exercise in the north that cohesive power that the papacy of the Middle Age had exercised over the south; he would have a national dictatorship, a religious restoration with a mitred Napoleon at its head.

Thus liberty was to lose itself in faith, as among the French it was lost in glory. After the manner of an Asiatic legislator, Goerres proposed to immure Germany, that she might be disciplined before going forth to the conquest of the future. Goerres is of all the writers of his country the most entirely German. The disordered vegetation of a primitive forest can alone give any idea of his style. Educated in the philosophy of Schelling, he applied it to history. In his orthodox pantheism, he gathered up the traditions of all times, Christian or pagan, in order to make a new Bible. His history of the religions of the East is a work of art and divination rather than of science.

Nature, which has opened in the wide horizon of Germany a field where modern societies may decide their political differences, has also used this same horizon as the arena in which opinions and human philosophy may be put to the test. Young and inoffensive as yet, they live together without quarrels, and they

believe that under the standard of pantheism this will long continue. But in the degree they develop, each will follow its own humour and walk in its own fashion. In this land of repose, there is nothing to-day but struggle. Protestantism against catholicism, pietism against protestantism, rationalism against pietism, form the fatal circle within which you cannot take a step without treading on a corpse.

All human opinions have their rendezvous there, and have come there to enter upon their last combat. Arrived at its highest point, the entire spiritual edifice of old Germany is silently perishing. Germany is itself engaged in dispersing its dust to the four winds of heaven—dust not of death but of life; not of matter but of thoughts; dust of ideas which the God of humanity gathers together to form a new world.

CHAPTER VIII.

ITALY. 1832.

"Wrecks of another world, whose ashes still are warm."
—*Byron.*

IT was a fortunate thing for Quinet that he was in the provinces during the early part of 1832, for it was just at this time that the cholera made its first appearance in Paris, raging with great severity, and exciting intense dismay by the terrible nature of the symptoms. The panic culminated when the head of the Government fell a victim to the plague.

Casimir Perier died on the 16th of May, and it must have been within a day or two of this event that Edgar Quinet paid a visit to Lamartine at Saint-Point, where he found him preparing for his voyage to the East. Within a few days after he left Bourg for Lyons, intending to go on to Italy. He seems to have gone by the Lake of Geneva through the Simplon. Winter was hardly over in the Alps, and the intense silence of the scene was broken only by the deadened sound of avalanches falling from distant peaks; the snow, glittering and rose-coloured in the May sunshine, forming a fitting vestibule to "the garden of the world."

The Lakes Maggiore and Como appear to him of the same colour as the Mediterranean, perhaps a little less blue, the Borromean Islands like a creation of Ariosto.

Of Milan Cathedral he says: "The mysticism of Gothic architecture seems out of its element in this land of Saturn." He wonders why, in Italian Gothic, the spire

is either suppressed or separated from the main body of the church, and suggests that the Italian cares less about cloudland than the German, or that perhaps the temerity of the spire was repugnant to the Roman tradition.

Every scene connected with Napoleon's campaign in Italy had a fascination for him: Castiglione, Lodi, Rivoli. In the amphitheatre at Verona he determines on a pilgrimage to Arcole. He is astonished to find the bridge so little—only five paces wide and about thirty long—and so weak that a goat might have made it tremble. The stream it crossed turned out to be a muddy canal not more than four feet deep, the neighbourhood a monotonous plain. There was everything in the scene to depress enthusiasm, but the poet-patriot sees in its melancholy fresh causes of devotion to France, to France who is always so holy and so good, the victim of rulers who restrain her noble passions. A star or two had appeared before he quits the battlefield, and the gates of Vicenza had been long closed when he reached that city.

As he travels over the swampy flats on his way to Venice he sees myriads of fireflies, lighting up, then going out, and lighting up again, like little wandering lamps in the land of the dead. The clock in the campanile of St. Mark struck eleven as he entered the Italian Tyre. The moon was just emerging from the clouds, gondolas glided past him, while on both sides of the Grand Canal the shadows of the palaces fell on the water, confusing themselves into an architecture fantastic as a dream.

At break of day he is at the cathedral, and has poetic thoughts about the flocks of pigeons that alight on every statue and pinnacle in the building. St. Mark's recalls an old Byzantine legend, and looks like St. Sophia, transported to the West. He has no enthusiasm for the stones of Venice. Venetian architecture appears to him to be oppressed with the weight of the Byzantine theology; a

precocious decrepitude is seen through its gilding; it has the ornate graces of the Greek Church, and nothing of the wild sublimity of Western Catholicism.

Of the council chamber in the Arabian-like palace of the Doge, he says :—

"The Venetian senate sat between two tortures, the leads above, the subterranean dungeons below. The grand hall itself is radiant with the magnificent paintings of Veronese and Tintoretto; you see in them patrician Venice arrayed in all its glory. Thus voluptuousness mingled itself with terror. The Venetian oligarchy were quite at home in a building which was at once a palace, a gaol, and a museum." He was shown a helmet of studied beauty, constructed to crush the heads of the accused. "Thus," he remarks, "Venice was artistic even in her tortures."

At perpetual war with nature and the world, secrecy was for the Venetian state the first condition of its continuity. It was not the place for poets, orators, historians, or philosophers. A mute art was the only one possible in a mute society. Yet the sombre severity of Venetian policy did not communicate itself to its painting. Titian and Paul Veronese have the sumptuous sensuality and the aristocratic character of the Council of Ten, but not a touch of its terrible profundity. A reflected ray of the Levant shines from their canvas, their imaginations have been partly formed in the bazaars of Cyprus and Byzantium.

These cullings from his notes, published four years after his return from Italy, give rather his matured thoughts than his immediate impressions. These impressions, at least with regard to Venice, were far more enthusiastic, as his letters show. In them he speaks of its being impossible to tear himself away from Venice. He wandered from morning to night over its mysterious bridges, going about when it got dark in a gondola, and stopping on the water far into the night.

"If," he says, "it is possible to die of happiness, I should die here. I write volumes of notes. Venice has the originality

of Spain, but of a Spain softened and rendered more beautiful by its fall. I am enamoured with it, and I can say nothing else. I should like to remain here and die." Again, "I have made a large study of the architecture of St. Mark, and of the palace of the Doge. I inwardly devour, like Saturn, all these stones, and it really affects me as if I had eaten the food of the gods. The women here are intoxicating; they have a grace and a seriousness full of mystery, of which nothing but their city gives any idea. I have seen admirable pictures of the Venetian school which will be valuable for my poem. My whole ambition as a writer would be to belong to this school."

In the following picture of Venice he seems to be making the effort:—

"Violet clouds, such as those that float over the canvas of Tintoretto, often mass themselves above the city, in lines so straight that they might have been drawn with a square. Then the light concentrates in a narrow belt on the horizon. Every object stands out upon this zone with incredible distinctness; masts, cordage, yards, oars, all is engraved on a sky of copper. From a ground of bronzed waves emerge the palace of the Doge, the campanile of St. Mark with its golden angel; and then, in the isles, the domes of San Giorgio, of the Redentore, and the Citelle. The entire city rises from this empurpled sea like a creation of one of its painters."

Ferrara, with its "wide and grass-grown streets," was the next city at which he stopped. Quinet shared Goethe's and Byron's view about Tasso's madness, and nothing so interested him in Ferrara as a visit to the cell where Leonora's brother immured the poet. He found the prison at the bottom of a little court. The vault was so low that in some parts it was impossible to stand upright. A heavy hailstorm, followed by a biting wind, seemed to be in harmony with the painful memories of the place.

From Torquata's prison he went to the house where Ariosto dwelt, and found the scene equally in harmony with his prosperous life.

"A brilliant sun irradiated the chamber of Messir Ludovico. A glossy cat snored at the threshold. Pigeons beat their wings against the glazing of the ogive window. Through the doors of

the apartments I heard the wind whispering and sighing like the agitated phantoms of the poet. His writing-case was on a table. I went down into the garden. It was then in full bloom. I picked some carnations and narcissus. Diapered butterflies rested on the Spanish grasses; a number of fowls were clucking. All proclaimed the dwelling of a happy man."

From Ferrara he went on to Bologna, where the appearance of the Austrians in the square excited his rage and grief. He hastens on to Florence, where he stops a week. Florence he calls the living commentary of Dante. Its architecture, painting, and sculpture of the fourteenth century have close resemblances with the "Divina Commedia."

He thinks it impossible to live at Florence without occupying oneself with the history of art. There the antique tradition met with Christian idealism, and from the union came forth a serenity of form unknown in the Venetian school. As the emblematic city of Dante, Florence rises with each age from circle to circle in art, until it reaches supreme beauty. A new Italy, more beautiful than the ancient one, came out of the tomb of Etruria.

He notes the singular fact that Rome, which has given its name to the greatest school, has never herself produced poet, painter, or sculptor. It is often said that religious epochs are favourable to art, but he thinks Italy tells a different tale. As long as faith was profound the painters left their works in a sort of divine infancy, whereas it is during the time that dogma is being attacked, during the era of the Reformation, that the greatest masters of the Venetian, Florentine, and Mantuan schools flourish. In the ages of faith religion moulds the painters, in the ages of art the painters mould religion.

In the Church of S. Lorenzo the monuments of the Medici made a deep impression on him. That of Lorenzo, son of Piero di Medici, is called *Il Penseroso*, because it

represents in so perfect a manner its subject seated in deep thought. This figure, meditating in the tomb, seemed to him to figure dead Italy dreaming over her past.

After he left Florence the wanderer passed on through Foligno and through Umbria, moving on towards Rome. On his road he went into the Apennines all alone during the night to see two little volcanoes, with a table knife in his pocket to defend himself from the bandits, who he was told made their pots boil on the sides of the crater. When he was still at some distance from Rome he quitted his *vetturino* and mounted a horse, that he might see the city more plainly. It was hidden to the last moment by the Monte Mario.

In his description of the Roman Campagna, he states, on the authority of an English map of 1834, that there were parts in it not then explored, and which remained white on the map as if they were in the centre of Asia. Another curious thing he mentions is, that at one of the gates of Rome—it would seem to have been the Porta Angelica, the one leading directly to the Piazza of St. Peter's, and the nearest to the Vatican—he saw a number of skulls heaped up in iron cages.

He arrived in Rome on the 11th of July, and seems to have remained there a considerable time. His most intimate friends were Chenavard and Gleyre, two artists.

For ancient Rome he has little sympathy. He thought that there was a character about its ruins that accorded well with the monstrous nature of its empire. He instances as an example the baths of Caracalla, which in their formless masses reveal the kind of madness that had seized the people under the Cæsars. From their walls he looked down on the antique city, and felt that it had the Babylonian character of the prophecies and lay under sentence of eternal condemnation.

The retributive vengeance of Providence is the one thought that strikes him in all he sees of old Rome. Its

most fitting aspect is in a great storm, for then outward nature seems in accord with the divine judgment.

"The first sign of such a storm is the Sirocco on the Campagna. Every creature becomes silent as at the approach of a bird of prey. A burning vapour swims in the atmosphere. The crests of the tall pines of the Villa Pamphila sway to and fro on the horizon. Bands of gulls and sea-birds rise from Ostia, alighting under the arches of the ruined bridges. The Tiber changes colour and looks like an infernal river. Sighs are heard coming up in puffs out of the rockwork of the Roma Vecchia. When the lightnings begin to flash, they surround as with an angry dawn the summit of the colisseum, the tower of Nero, the battlements of Adrian's mole, and the tall obelisks in the squares. You might fancy an invisible hand was opening and shutting the sepulchre of the old world. Then the ruins become pale as ghosts; the nettles on the Thermes emit a faint odour; and the piled-up clouds becoming the colour of blood, end in bursting over the devoted city.

"If the bell of S. Onofrio should at this moment happen to toll, its feeble sound is quickly repeated by a thousand others, and scarcely has the last sound died out when an immense murmur exhales from the earth. The confraternities of the dead raise their mournful chants on the declivity of the Aventine, Christian Rome kneels on the sepulchre of pagan Rome; all repeating far into the night, *Miserere! miserere!*"

He studies Rome of the Middle Age in the Byzantine cloisters, in the basilicas, and in the mosaics. In the latter the impression of the early ages of Christianity is most complete. There is in them the same barbarism and the same sublimity as in the fathers. Their natural relation is with the catacombs, the Lombardian cupolas, the Gregorian chant, with the old organ of Byzantium, and the poetry of the litanies and of the *Dies Iræ*.

The mosaic in the ruined church of *S. Paolo fuori le Mura* moved him deeply. This church, one of the earliest in the neighbourhood of Rome, and supposed to contain the bodies of the apostles Peter and Paul, was burnt down in 1823. Fortunately the apse of the cathedral escaped, and this contained a colossal figure in mosaic of Christ. When Edgar Quinet saw it, the

figure stood among ruins, with workmen in all directions cutting stone and preparing for a new building. In the midst of all these distracting influences

"The religion which reigned in the features, the attitude, the gesture of the figure was," he says, "so profound, that I was affected as if by a liturgic portrait sketched by the hand of a martyr. The Christ of the first ages seemed to be there, pensive over the ruins of His church. Under His feet grew the briers of the Campagna, the tired grasshoppers cried around Him, and my heart, a thousand times more tired than they, rose by bounds to the impression of the lost faith to which the stones around bore witness. I was glad to move away, for the great eyelids seemed to open and the eyes always rested on me. I saw the clouds pass over the city, and at some distance shadow the walls. All recalled the legend of the travelling Christ at the gate of Rome. . . . Since then I have seen the masterpieces of the Vatican, but nothing has so laid hold of me, nothing has appeared to me so apocalyptic, as that Christ of the fourth century standing on the ruins of His church, amidst the brushwood and the buffaloes of the Roman Campagna."

The feature that gives Rome its character, that, rising above all its ruins, combines its various periods under the visible domination of the papacy, is the dome of St. Peter's. It is the manifest emblem of the triumphant Church. For the Rome of the Renaissance is in some sort Rome restored to life again on the tombs of the martyrs. This new Rome of the sixteenth century realised on earth the ideal city of the future, which the Christians of the Middle Age had imagined. Comprehending all forms and all times, it became the image of the city of God and of universal history. Two great artists completed the work; one had the inspiration of the Old Testament, the other of the New. The painting of Raffaelle is not the work of a single mind, summing up all that preceded; it is so tied to tradition as often to seem independent of the will and choice of the artist. Under the full-orbed sun of the Renaissance you see the asceticism and the sadness of the Middle Age. In Raffaelle there is something of Perugino, of

Masaccio, and of Fra Angelico. His frescoes are the epic of the Christian tradition.

Michael Angelo is quite otherwise. He has neither master nor past. If a real relationship to Dante and the Pisan sculptors can be seen in him, there is also something of the harshness of civil discord, of the vehemence of Savonarola, of the tumultuous spirit of the Guelphs and the Ghibellines; he has, above all, the spirit of infallibility, which owes nought to any but to himself. He makes, he increases tradition; he does not receive it. He governs, he reigns, in the same way as the Pope. In his biblical platonism he has glimpses of ideas, forms; he alone perceives them, yet he imposes them on the world, and the world submits. His works are decrees, his God is the God of excommunication, his madonna that of vengeance, his heaven a menacing one. In Michael Angelo there is something of Gregory VII., just as there is something of Leo X. in Raffaelle.

But what gives all its life to modern Rome are the fêtes of Catholicism. Rome, Quinet says,

"is artistic in matters of faith at least as much as it is devotee by profession. When at Christmas the peasants come down from the mountains, their rustic rites recall the primitive times when the people took part in the liturgy. The women harmonise well with the candelabra, the statues, the pictures, of the Roman Church. It is this resemblance between the monuments of art and this people of pilgrims that contributes so much to the magic of the fêtes of Rome."

Then, after a graphic description of the Pope blessing Rome and the world on Easter day, the wanderer bursts out in admiration—

"O city great and glorious! since in thee is still found the question which occupies the world, the only one that is worth debating,—shall thy ruler remain ruler of the world? shalt thou remain queen of queens? will it happen to thee as to all the cities built by men? wilt thou have thy rising and thy setting? or wilt thou, as the city of God, eternally repair thy ruins?

"If he who blest thee yesterday should die to-morrow, and disappear without a successor, where would be a solitude like unto thine? Then thou, the city of ruins, wouldst know what it is to be desolate; for so long as that old man dwells in the same tomb with thee, thy desert is filled; he is thy bridegroom, thou art his bride. If he is dying, thou art dying. If he should be reborn, thou wilt be reborn.

"Pilgrim of doubt, I have done as the pilgrims of faith; I have visited the tombs, in the catacombs I have touched the bones of the martyrs. Passers-by looking on, might have said, 'There is a faithful believer.' But while they prayed, I only listened; while they adored, I tried to adore; and when I knelt as they did, my rebellious spirit stood up in the midst of the church in the face of what they believed to be God.

"I might, like others, have taken for a sign of faith the amusements of my fancy or the commotions of my imagination. But this snare, to my mind more impious than blasphemy, has in nowise seduced me. Between the poet who dreams, and the faithful who believes, there is, whatever may be said, a whole abyss. Rather than only half believe, half love anything, I prefer to believe nothing, to love nothing."

"I am emerging," he writes to his mother from Rome in the autumn of 1832, "from a trouble so frightful that I dread all things, and can give my confidence to nothing but the stones and trees of the villas."

The quotation just given explains what this "trouble so frightful" was. Clearly the temptation of religious minds in all ages. Only make a little obeisance in the heart to the spirit of falsehood, and all shall be yours, all the joys of faith, of hope, of peace!

"Ahasuerus" was the book he was writing while in Italy. This book is precious indeed, because it was wrung out of the agonies of an honest soul.

Upon leaving Rome, Quinet went to the south of Italy, and one of his adventures was the ascent of Vesuvius by night. The volcano was in a very irritable state. From December 25th, 1831, to February 1832, streams of lava had been pouring forth at intervals, and on the 13th of August in the following year three streams descended on the Torre del Greco, so that probably the sight he saw was unusually grand. There can be no doubt that

the second scene in the first part of "Prometheus" was moulded on this night's experience. In his notes he thus relates the actual facts:—

"At eight o'clock I set out from the little town of Torre del Greco. After an hour's walk I reached the hermitage. The night was pitch dark. I lit my torch, the hermit wished me good luck; I went on my way with my guide, and very soon attained the foot of the cone.

"At this distance I was too near the volcano to see it: I only heard above my head explosions, which the echoes increased in a formidable manner, and a rain of stones that rolled down in the darkness. From this tempest came out a great sigh as if a giant was being stoned. The wind extinguished my torch; I finished by climbing the mountain in complete darkness. But at the moment I reached the summit, an infernal glare lit up the sky. The soil trembled under my feet; it was warm to the touch. Through its *crevasses* shone the fiery veins of a hidden furnace. In the midst of the crater where I had come, a new one formed itself which appeared all in flames. The mouth of the abyss exhaled an immense and long-continued breath. This aspiration and respiration, profound and regular as that of the bellows of a forge, rose from the bosom of the oppressed mountain. A terrible detonation followed them. The flaming stones were whirled out of sight and fell with a tremendous noise on the edges of the cone. The precipitous sides and the interior of the abyss were lit up as in full daylight.

"In the distant openings of the crater the lava sprang from the soil. It ran sparkling from four mouths: very soon the mountain uttered a gigantic groan. At the moment of the explosion, looking towards the sea, I saw distinctly the little boats at anchor.

"The mountain trembled exceedingly, but the waves were not moved. It was fine to behold the sea thus slumbering peacefully at the base of the exasperated mountain. The bay of Naples resembled the Angelica of Ariosto under the extended wings of the chimera.

"I sat down on the trembling earth; nature was seized with a dizziness to which I abandoned myself with delight. These intervals of noise and silence, of light and darkness; the calm of the night, the calm not less great of the sea; the mountain starting with emotion: all these contrary effects strengthened one another. Without reflecting upon it, I found in this sight a crowd of images applicable to the moral state in which I then was, and which had got so much worse since I left Rome."

"I passed the night on this height. When the day appeared I was able to satiate myself at leisure with a view of the famous gulf that stretched at my feet. In the distance the isle of Capri, in form like an ancient galley, shut out the open sea. The sun rose on the other side of Pompeii; it rested some time on the tombs like a funeral torch. It was the signal for a multitude of little vessels to quit the shore and hoist their sails. I heard at the same moment the noise of the towns and villages waking up. The vines entwined among the poplars began to shiver in the sea breeze, a moment after the light sparkled on the wrinkled water; a golden vapour, like the dust of stars, rose on the horizon; the air was loaded with perfumes. All nature appeared drunk as at a pagan fête; and as long as the volcano continued to be agitated, this Christian Campania resembled the sybil muttering on the tripod."

In Naples, the city of the senses, he remarks that the most important monuments are tombs, and that those tombs nearly all belong to the epoch of the Spanish rule. He makes the observation that from this careless people, whose hero appears to be Polichinello, have arisen men of the highest spiritual type, or of boundless energy—Pythagoras and his school, Thomas Aquinas, Vico, Spagnoletto, Salvator Rosa. He describes an improvisatore reciting his stories to a crowd of the "noble public"—*nobile publico*—seated in a circle beneath the shadow of a sail-cloth on the mole. He moralises over the difficulties of a young monk of the Camaldoli in the midst of the attractions nature spreads around him.

The siren character of nature in this neighbourhood leads him to speak of the scenes of Roman voluptuousness. When the Romans began to grow corrupt and to become disgusted with the grandeur and severity of their city, they sought this nature intoxicated and monstrous as themselves. The mixture of voluptuousness and terror characteristic of the times of Tiberius, Nero, Caligula, had its natural counterpart in the promontories of Capri and Misenum. Here, hard by the lakes Avernus and Acherusia, the entrances to the infernal regions, Roman society planted its villas and held its insolent feasts.

Visiting the isle of Capri, he finds the abode of the emperor hidden among tufts of wormwood. A hermit dwells among its ruins. In front is the open sea, on the left the gulf of Sorrento and the peaks of Amalfi. From thence the old emperor, with the instinct of his successor, the osprey, could look down upon his empire, and see coming from afar the tempest which no ship could avoid.

"At bottom the antique world was disgusted with itself, and tried to escape from itself by every open road. Those at the head of affairs vaguely felt that a great change was preparing against which it was impossible to contend. Despair seized them, but they did not know whether the evil was in their own hearts or in that of the people, in the great or in the gods, but they knew that they must perish, and that the whole universe was in the plot. Hence this prodigious fright, this ceaseless suspicion."

While in Capri he very nearly got shut up for a week in the grotto Azura. In company with two others, a doctor and a painter, he had entered the grotto in the usual way; lying down flat in the boat, the entrance being only three feet high. The extraordinary beauty of this azure cavern is well known. Quinet calls it "the sapphire shell of the siren of Naples."

The painter commenced a sketch, and none of them perceived that the wind was freshening without. When they did, it was too late, the storm was up. From the sides of the mountain came roarings like a herd of sea-bulls, and at times explosions like the battery of a fort. The waves quickly blocked up the opening. The basin of the gulf, so tranquil an hour before, rose in its turn, and the visitors remained plunged in livid obscurity. When the flood withdrew they could see the ravines hollowed out in the gulf. After one of its returns they tried to follow the wave, but just as they reached the opening it rose again and broke over them with fury. It raised their boat perpendicularly, forced it against the side of the cavern, and finally threw it into the centre.

Quinet proposed to try and swim out in order to get succour, but this was impracticable, owing to the violent way in which the surf beat against the entrance.

They made up their minds that they should have to pass the night in the place, and got on to the ledge of a rock. At sunset the sea fell. About an hour afterwards they thought that they heard voices. Some inhabitants of Capri, who had seen them leave in the morning, had divined their embarrassment. They attempted to tug them out, but could not succeed until night had closed in and the wind had fallen.

On All Saints' day in Naples he saw the skulls of the dead brought out from their tombs and placed in the middle of the vaults of the churches between lighted tapers, each having its name written on the forehead. The crowd came and looked, but betrayed no horror, either because it was a traditional custom, or, as Quinet suggests, because there is in the soil of this country a mixture of asceticism and sensuality which time cannot efface.

Of the street of tombs in Pompeii he says :—

"You come here in too close proximity with the vulgar details of life in antiquity. The caricatures on the walls take away all seriousness from the past; you are in the midst of the gossip of the dead of a little provincial town. Pompeii is not a Sodom condemned by celestial fire, it is only the Epicurean sarcophagus of a courtisan of Campania."

Pæstum was the extreme point of his travels in Italy. In the neighbourhood of "The Three Temples," he went into a dilapidated *locanda*, that contained a sick peasant. The hut recalled one of those bewitched dwellings he had read of in the feverish book of Apuleius. It had the same destitution, the same magical memories and surrounding names. He asked some food; his miserable host set before him curdled milk and bread. But what with the excessive heat and the miasma of the maremma he fell asleep, and had a dream that he could not forget.

"Italy appeared without inhabitants; by degrees, however, all

the art forms that I had seen and admired in my route awoke from the cold marble, or came out of the picture-frames, becoming real beings, and walking about instead of the inhabitants who were no more. The Venetians were the first to throw off the dust which covered them. They assembled with light steps on the *Lido*, and murmured together in a tongue flowing and coloured as the waves of the Adriatic. Leonardi da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* bent over the bank to look at herself in the Lago Garda. Michael Angelo's sybils seated themselves in the Campagna of Rome, and day and night from the Chapel of San Lorenzo rose up shivering, like celestial Bohemians. In Giotto's campanile, without a moment's rest, the blessed anachorites of Fiesole, quitting their cells and their frescoes, ran up and down, unrestrained by fear of mortal man.

"Along the coasts, how many angels and archangels came down from the old heaven of Byzantine art, folding their golden wings as they rested near the shore! From their tuscan viols they drew forth ineffable sounds, such as those I had imagined in the forest of the Dombes! They chanted entire poems of which I had babbled the first syllables as I wandered along the damp meadow paths. Finally, I saw Raffaelle's Virgin with the veil, passing with her two children into the garden of the Cæsars: there she gathered fresh flowers, and she smiled, for no human doubt had yet communicated itself to these daughters of man's spirit. They alone had kept the faith of the bygone ages, and that eternal love of which the earth was deprived. I heard a voice that said, 'Holy, holy be for ever this land of Italy, this land that has nourished us with her paps, and clothed us with the summer's sun.'"

Book IV.

THE POET.

"Where is the man who does not need an inward ablution before accomplishing his task? Where is he who has not bathed in the flood of human griefs before receiving, according to the oriental expression, the new life, that is, the life of inspiration? Where is the philosopher, the artist who, once at least, has not washed the dust off his dreams on the shores of the immaculate lakes, and cooled his brow in the unfathomable abyss? Does not every poet, before commencing his work, commune with himself in the secret of the forest, or in the secret of his own heart? The painters of the Middle Age, more poets than painters, knelt down before taking up their pencils; they began by worshipping within themselves the image they were about to represent. What is this but to say, that no one can enter the kingdom of poetry, of philosophy, of reason, without passing through a trial of some kind?"



Minna Quinet-Moré (1827, *at the age of* 25).

To face p. 161.

CHAPTER I.

FRANCE, GERMANY, ITALY. 1831–1832.

"When will this wandering life end? Whatever you may say, I was made for a more peaceful life and less troubled affections."

—*Letter to his Mother, September 1826.*

THE wanderer now became the poet. The pilgrim through many lands now sought to depict a pilgrimage far more tortuous than the one his actual feet had trod, the wanderings of his soul found their reflection in this pilgrim life. It is, in fact, the image ever consecrated by Christian thought and feeling to man's interior travail. Many before had spoken of the believer, the saint, as a pilgrim; no one had thought of depicting the sceptic, the accursed, under such an emblem. But is it less true?

Bunyan's Pilgrim wandered by faith through the wilderness of this world to the celestial city; Quinet's pilgrim wanders in doubt through the whole visible earth until he reaches his final bourn,—the day of judgment. The one is a picture of the struggling soul in the seventeenth century, the other of the same internal conflict in the nineteenth. In the first it is the individual soul, purely and simply; in the last it is still the individual soul, but that soul mingled with the idea of the soul of Humanity; the personality is strong as ever, but the boundary between it and the universal soul is undefined. In the first the salvation of the individual soul is the absorbing thought; in the last the effort after salvation is lost in a sense of

reprobation, the soul wanders guideless, but impelled by an eternal restlessness towards a goal which always seems distant and unattainable. In the first the soul is ascetic, it quits even wife and children, that it may itself escape from destruction; in the last destruction would be welcome, nought seems worth existence until it finds its partner. Woman to the first appears a siren beckoning the soul to perdition, woman in the last appears the sole link with heaven. Peace, joy, praise—these are the objects after which the elder pilgrim sought, and in which he found his rest; sadness, weariness, a sense of treachery in all things, a feeling that creation regards him as an outcast, and drives him from every joy, as one branded with the mark of Cain—this is the tone of mind in which the modern pilgrim treads the weary journey from Jerusalem to judgment.

An evangelist arouses the elder pilgrim, the Scriptures have furnished the impetus which has filled his soul with a longing after heavenly things; an angel of wrath commands the unhappy pilgrim of the nineteenth century to leave the home of his childhood, to mount the black steed of care, to bid adieu for ever to quiet rest, and for what?—because he has rejected the Christ.

Thrice unhappy soul, thrice unhappy age, that has bid farewell to all joy, all hope, yet preserves a conscience, a faith below all doubt, a love stronger than death, shall its pilgrimage be less interesting than that of the pilgrimage of the struggler after righteousness in the age of puritanism? Soul of the mighty dreamer, thy mantle hath fallen on one who, like thee, not only pondered but fought; on one who, like thee, wrought out of his own inner consciousness, his own sad experiences, the parable of his age. Like thee he lay in prison, but his prison was an intellectual one. He wandered bound and tied through many lands, writing his allegory, piece by piece, in Italian cities, in German

cathedrals, in French villages, in Greek deserts. The pilgrim of faith spun his divine allegory in a cell in Bedford gaol; the pilgrim of doubt needed to be reminded how empty were the noblest works of human genius in the presence of an eternal void, before he could wring out in full measure the agony of despair that had seized upon him and upon all his contemporaries.

"To-day a strange malady ceaselessly torments us. How shall I describe it? It is not like yours, Réné, mere decay; it is far more poignant and severe. Day by day it reanimates the heart only that it may feed itself. It is the shadow of future evil—evil most bitter, which, never slumbering, stands hour by hour at your bedside, saying to you, as to the little Capet, 'Can you sleep? As for me, I wait and watch!' From the bottom of our souls we already feel what is going to happen. That nothing is already something which makes us pant with terror. We see it, we touch it, although the world is still unaware of it. What kills us is not the feebleness of our own thought, it is having to support the weight of the future in the void of the present. In order to cure our fever, we put to our mouths the cup in which to-morrow human lips will drink, but it is not ours. What are these pains that agonise humanity? Is it about to give birth to a God?"

When this work first appeared, a French critic[1] thus expressed himself:—

"There is in this work, so unexpected, so poetic, so likely to disconcert routine, all that can excite admiration and sharpen sarcasm. Its ground and form, thought and language, are alike marked by force and quite dazzling in their novelty. Indeed, the colours are too vivid, the effects too intense, the disdain for half-tones too absolute. Everything hastens on, sparkles, gushes forth. At the sound of this lyric torrent, thought, even when most accustomed to the boldest flights of the imagination, starts back, unwilling to cross the vortex. Instead of flowing majestically along, restrained, reposeful, poetry here overflows its banks, rushing on, devouring its bed, and hurrying us with the rapidity of lightning to the last limits of the unknown. In this voyage beyond time and the world, very few among us are clear-sighted enough not to be troubled with vertigo. Moreover, there is nothing in contemporaneous art which will prepare us

[1] M. Magnin in the "Revue des Deux Mondes."

for such an experience. Byron, Goethe, Chateaubriand, have dug deep into the human soul, but none of them has anywhere attempted the infinite beyond the heart and brain of man. Edgar Quinet specially seeks it in nature; it is the secret of creation that he pursues. His spiritualism stops nowhere in the scale of beings. He interrogates the soul of the ocean, the thought of the stars, the song of the flowers, the silence of the desert, with as much love as the spirit of the races, the voice of the ages, the murmurs of the crowd, the thought of the cathedrals. His vocation is to decipher the great letters that the finger of the Eternal has printed on all things, and to translate in poetic vibrations the secret music that the world exhales from the bosom of each of its elements, and from all its creatures."

The form in which Quinet has thrown his drama is that of the ancient mysteries, that form so free and universal, harmonising in many ways with the nature of the legend. The Mystery takes four days to unfold itself, with an interlude between each, a prologue and an epilogue enclosing the whole.

AHASUERUS.

Heaven is the scene of the prologue. Nearly three thousand years have elapsed since the day of judgment. The world that then ceased to exist had been dominated by evil; that which God is about to create will be a better one. St. Michael, St. Thomas, St. Bonaventura, great St. Hubert of Liege, Pythagoras, Joseph the Just, and Marcus Tullius,[1] are chosen to keep watch over this new universe; and, in order to fit them for their office, they are made to understand the mystery of the old by a dramatic representation in eternal forms of its history. Every epoch, all ages; everything, in fact, great and small, from the hoary ocean to the flower of a day, finds a voice and reveals the secret of its being. There is silence in heaven, and the spectacle commences.

The first day, called *the Creation*, covers the whole youth of the world, and extends to the birth of the Christ.

It opens with the ocean, as yet the sole creation, complaining to its Lord of only seeing Him in its immensity. Ere long Leviathan, the bird Vinateyna, the serpent, the fish Macar, people the waters, the earth, and the skies. Lately emerged from nothingness, these new creatures examine their dwelling-place. Finding no other beings but themselves, they imagine that they are its masters, and with one voice they cry, "It is we who are

[1] The representatives to the mind of the Middle Age of the idea of law.

God!" The hoary ocean reproves their folly, and bids them make another search, for there is One who hears them—One the stroke of whose sword resounds louder than the scales of Leviathan, whose wings are larger than those of the bird Vinateyna, whose wounds are more terrible than those of the serpent with a thousand heads.

Another epoch, and giants and Titans awake in the caverns of the earth, and speak dreamily to each other. To the foreboding of one of their number, these sons of earth reply by throwing themselves with ardour into their work, and, breaking up the stones and the clay, build gigantic walls, and set up sharp rocks which they cover with runes and hieroglyphs. The Eternal causes His faithful ocean to efface beneath its floods this rough sketch of life as something with which He is not satisfied.

Next comes a scene in which a great despot has set up a high tower and defies the universe. The story of King Knut and his courtiers here takes the form of a gigantic legend of the flood.

The human tribes appear assembled on the Himalayas. Saluting day and night, the sea, the rivers, the everlasting hills, they ask each object in nature to tell them of their Creator. The time comes for them to depart. Who will show them the way? One tribe chooses the Ganges for guide; another, the griffin; a third, the ibis. The people are quickly tired and want to rest, but their chosen leaders, imperturbable, hurry them forward to their predestined home, prophesying in symbolic language their future history.

Next is seen a cloudless night in the East. The moon, the stars, a flower of the desert, the floods of the Euphrates gently murmuring beneath the willows; all appear possessed with the mystery of the universe. A concert rises sweetly sad—a sigh of a slave, a word of a king, a quire of priests. The history of the ages that have no annals is related by the mouth of the sphinx. In this strange song are mingled the voices of Thebes, of Nineveh, of Persepolis, of Palmyra.

Babylon proposes to make of all their gods only one God. Jerusalem appears, proclaiming good tidings; she has seen a God lying in the manger of a stable. Three kings, the oldest and the wisest, are deputed by the East to go and adore the new-born God. They offer the Christ a cup of ruddy gold from which all the kings of the earth have drunk, and a heavy crown garnished with nails made of rubies. The virgin mother is frightened at the gifts, and the Infant shows more pleasure at the presence of the shepherds. The kings turn from Him weeping. The sun of the old East is obscured, the dawn of the West arises. Above the roof where the Christ sleeps sing the

small birds, then comes a song from the shepherds, after which the angel Rachel sings to her viol, and the scene concluding by a dialogue between the mother and child concerning their return to their eternal home.

To the first day succeeds a dance of demons. Beelzebub, Lucifer, Ashtoreth, criticise the heavenly drama.

The second day, *the Passion*, commences by a lamentation of the desert. Its favourite palm-tree has caught sight of the Christ toiling up the rugged path that leads to Golgotha. For the love of Jehovah and the palm-tree, the desert strains itself to overwhelm the streets of Jerusalem with clouds of sand before the Christ can arrive at Calvary, but its course is too slow. Already the crowd follow Jesus staggering beneath His cross. Ahasuerus stands before his door, a partaker in their cruel delight. The Saviour turns to him; asks him for a little water. He begs him to help Him to carry His cross, but Ahasuerus turns away with contempt. He asks him to let Him rest at his threshold, and Ahasuerus cries out: "Sorcerer, get out of my way. Move on, move on." Then the Christ replies: "Why hast thou said this, Ahasuerus? Thou it is who wilt move on until the last judgment. Wherever thou goest thou shalt be called THE WANDERING JEW. Thou it is who shalt never find seat on which to rest thyself, nor mountain stream at which to slake thy thirst. Thou shalt bear in my stead the burden I go to lay down on the cross. In thy thirst thou shalt drink the dregs that I shall leave at the bottom of my cup. Others shall have my vesture, thou alone shalt inherit my endless sorrow. From thy staff shall bud the hyssop, from thy flask shall flow nothing but wormwood and gall; despair shall grasp the girdle of thy reins. Thou art the man who shall never see death. . . . I go to Golgotha, but thou, thou shalt go on from ruin to ruin, from kingdom to kingdom, without ever reaching thy Calvary. The gate of thy city shall say to thee, 'Further on, my bench is for others;' the river where thou wouldest rest thyself will say to thee, 'Further on! my bank is my own, it is full of briers.' And the sea, too, will say, 'Further on, further on; art not thou that eternal traveller who goes from people to people, from age to age, drinking nothing but tears, who sleeps not, day nor night, and who can never return by the way that thou hast had to ascend?' . . . Thou art the man who shall go from temple to temple asking for me, but without ever meeting me. Thou art the man who shall cry, Where is He? until, guided by the dead, thou shalt find thyself on the way to the last judgment. When thou seest me

again my eyes will be as a flame of fire, and my finger will be raised to beckon thee into the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

At the voice of the Christ a Roman soldier throws away his arms and returns to his wife and little ones in Calabria, while the crowd fall back in dismay. Let Ahasuerus be the scape-goat of Juda, they will remain peacefully on their own thresholds and drink the wine of Carmel.

The condemned man is as one thunderstruck. Coming to himself, he would go back into his house and ask his sister Martha to sing a hymn, hoping thus to get rid of the terrible voice which still rings in his ears. But on turning to the door of his house there stands an angel of woe, leaning against the black mane of a horse. It is St. Michael with Seméhé, the horse that has wandered night and day since the beginning of the world. Ahasuerus must mount and depart as soon as the night is come.

Inside the house his little brothers are playing, and his father Nathan rejoicing over the fate of the false King of the Jews, and even indulging the hope that perchance one of his own sons may prove the true Messiah. Embracing his family, and bidding a last adieu to the seat at the door and the paternal threshold, Ahasuerus sets out for the West, calling on the birds of the night to precede him and to prepare for him a resting-place.

After a first tour of the earth the feet of his horse strike the dead leaves of the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The weary traveller would rest there and drink one drop of water from the muddy spring, but the valley refuses to allow him. The answer to each of his prayers is only an echo of the malediction pronounced by the Christ.

To avenge the death of that Just One, the Eternal launches the barbaric hordes against the old Roman world, as formerly He launched the waters of the deluge against the young world of the East. The Goths, the Huns, the Hericles, rush together to the spot where the Roman mare has fallen, in order to trample her to death with their hoofs.

Then a second interlude intervenes. The horses of Attila recall the battle-horses of France, and give occasion to the poet to arouse the flagging patriotism of his countrymen.

The third day, *Death*, introduces us to the Middle Age. From a battlemented tower that overhangs the Rhine, is heard at midnight a melancholy voice talking with the watchman. The voice is that of a Christian monarch. Their conversation awakens St. Eloi, and he explains to King Dagobert the manifest signs of the approaching end of the world.

In the next scene Death, under the guise of an old woman called *Mob*, appears seated by some ashes; *Rachel*, a young girl, lives with her. Once an angel, Rachel has fallen from heaven, and now lives with Death as her servant. Her sin—pity for Ahasuerus, in whose miserable fate she forgot the suffering God. Mob continually reminds her of her former blessedness, and ridicules her for longing after it. "What dost thou, seated on thy chair, gazing all day long through one pane of the window at a corner of the heavens? Thou wilt never more re-enter that world of dreams."

Panting, exhausted, imploring death, Ahasuerus draws nigh to the city where Mob and Rachel live. His faithful steed is not proof against the approach of Mob, it falls and dies at the gate of the city. Ahasuerus only feels faint. The neighbourhood of Rachel seems already to have lightened the curse, his sentence begins to receive a less literal execution. He has been everywhere, but one place remained—a woman's heart: that place he has found; he has for one day, at least, found rest. It will no longer be his feet, but his heart and his mind, that will have to traverse this new universe. But it will be a new anguish, for she who loves him will die, and he will continue to exist. More solitary, more cursed than ever, he will have to move on in the road that knows no end.

Rachel is strangely troubled by the arrival of this stranger. Everything seems to speak the very word she wants to avoid. When she sleeps the fairies sing to her of love; between each verse of her prayer they distract her with terrestrial thoughts. She asks Ahasuerus from what country he comes; she imagines him the son of a king, then she thinks him a holy man; she beseeches him to pray for her; she wanders with him in a garden, her questions and her answers sounding like half-memories, echoes of another state of being.

Meanwhile Mob penetrates with her icy breath the heart of Ahasuerus, that heart which longs to open to faith and to dilate with hope. She hears him sighing, offers him a drink that will cure his pain, advises him to travel, suggests that in place of dreams he should occupy himself with realities, he should study science. Science, he complains, is too dry, it can never fill his heart. Ah! he is unhappily organised; why not try the trade of the warrior? nothing better to kill time. That he has tried, and found in it no relief. Try politics, suggests Mob; only be sure to make interest, properly understood, an infallible guide. But Ahasuerus will not hear her to the end; so, remarking that he is terribly *blasé* for a man of his age, she tells him that his best plan is to throw himself into the arms of religion. What does she mean? Well, she favours *method* in religious matters.

"Imagine that you have reduced the whole of life to five or six little maxims, so nicely calculated that they hold together like an egg-shell. All that can enter into the shell is the universe, all that cannot is the nothing. This division is easy to remember, and it is extremely convenient thus to possess at every hour all the secrets of life, all the mysteries of the soul and of heaven, a complete knowledge of the heart and of nature, on a bit of paper just big enough for a recipe against the megrims."

Ahasuerus replies that if she is not mocking the idea is hopeless; what he is seeking is a new religion, one that shall satisfy the infinite thirst that devours him. Mob would like this also, but until heaven declares itself, would it not be wise to make a god of oneself? Ahasuerus breaks out into a passionate account of his painful travail, from hope to hope, from religion to religion. How he has interrogated waves, shores, cities, trees, valleys, mountains, and has had no answer but a sigh. Mob says that it is a great folly of the age to believe nature has any sympathies or antipathies whatever; nature has atoms, that is all. If Ahasuerus is honest he will see that all his evils are in himself. If he must have a religion, love, when pure, is one, after a fashion. Yes, he replies, if he could find one friendly heart in which he could lose himself, he could bear the scorn of the world. That is not enough, Mob insinuates; the senses must not be sacrificed. Of course she would respect life's proprieties; a man has a rank, a name, a position, to keep up. Yes, he admits it: a thousand things separate those that love, but then comes a moment in which the secret of the heart escapes the lips, and that moment is sufficient to embalm an eternity of ages.

Embalm! What? a mummy? You exaggerate. Women are all alike, the best will dupe you. If you amuse them, you are quits with them. They were made for the pleasure of men, they think so themselves; nothing is easier than to make them adore you.

No, he cannot play at love; if this is so, better destroy this hope at once. Exaltation again; no, he needs love and much of it: without it life is nothing, nothing. One has only tasted the half of things, yet it is folly to deceive oneself with sentimentality, and Mob proceeds to draw a loathsome picture of the too certain future of beauty. She expresses surprise that Ahasuerus should be shocked, she thought reason had more power over him. Is not death the true remedy for all miseries, the only lover worth having; and, in any case, are there not extraordinary positions in which suicide is excusable?

As that solution, however, is impossible to Ahasuerus, he sees nothing before him but endless despair. But still Mob is not

disconcerted, and she sets herself to find consolation for the man who cannot commit suicide; but Ahasuerus will not be consoled. He feels dazed, he sees nothing but darkness. Ah! says Mob, 'tis midnight; and so, shaking her dark robe and unfolding her long black wings, she takes her sombre flight, rising in the light of the moon, above the shuddering cities, just as Orcagna has so well painted her in the frescoes of the Campo Santo at Pisa.

But if the progress of a universal scepticism, reducing to nothing all poetry, religion, and love, is thus admirably sketched; with equal delicacy does the poet trace the growth of love in the heart of a woman. Rachel at first repels the admiration of Ahasuerus as profane; she then finds it only an echo of his own perfection; finally, she finds no impiety in it, but only a proof that he is more profoundly religious than she is, since he has such a much grander idea of love. All she fears now is the death that must separate them, and here in trying to console her Ahasuerus reveals his scepticism. Life, death, who knows their difference? Rachel is troubled that she cannot comprehend him; she fears that he will not love her enough, because she has so little soul. Again, Ahasuerus breaks out into thoughts so materialistic that he seems to deny existence apart from the body, so spiritualistic that he is not sure that she is more than a spirit for which his spirit thirsts, more than a shadow to refresh his shade, more than a thought to engulph his thought in a nothing broken by perfumes and sighs.

Rachel is shocked, her crucifix seems to bleed. Ahasuerus kisses it, but the more he does so the more the stains appear. She fancies that his very breath is on fire. He is in despair, and reproaches the Christ. Rachel falls at the feet of Ahasuerus, beseeching him to pity her. Has He had pity on me? the agonised man exclaims; and with a blasphemous defiance, expressive of the intensity of his love for Rachel, the scene closes.

A chorus of fairies intervenes, calling on Sodom and Gomorrah to cover with their darkness this evening's blasphemy. Their horror, however, gives place to the thought that the good who dwell in bliss see far beyond these gloomy skies, and have no fear when they behold a woman weeping at the foot of the Cross.

In the next scene Rachel has lost her senses; she raves of hell, and thinks Ahasuerus a demon, who has come to carry her away. At times she laughs, recognises him, and thinks that they are married, and then lapses again into a state of horror in which she tries to exorcise the demon by pronouncing the sacred name. Meanwhile Ahasuerus bathes her temples, and as she is recovering, Mob enters. Ahasuerus, recognising Mob as Death, fears her not, but Rachel is in terror lest she should kill him. Mob, knowing that it is impossible, makes a virtue of necessity, and only

professes surprise to find Ahasuerus in Rachel's chamber, demanding that propriety should be respected, and their wedding rites solemnised at a church. Ahasuerus is entirely in her hands, and will go with her whither she will. Suddenly she places them both on her horse, and flies with them to the cathedral of Strasburg.

How is it possible to describe the extraordinary scene that follows, or to give any idea of its power? The cathedral appears as an animated being, the perfection of beauty, of mystery, the work of ages, the representation of eternity visible upon earth. All its wondrous art, all its marvellous forms, all the toil going on here through many generations, is depicted in a series of poems in prose. All at once these forms are living, moving; the marble is uttering loud cries, the windows are shivering, the tombs open, and the kings, the women and the children, Attila, Sigefroy, Arthur, Charlemagne, Gregory the Great, arise, all accusing the Christ of having deceived them. A thousand years have passed away and the Father's house has not opened to them. They lie still in their cold tombs, and the spider weaves over them its web; they hear nothing but the gnawing worm beneath them.

"Dance! dance! kings and queens, children and women! Take each other's hands; go the round of the nave; and with your waltzes mix songs." Loud knocks are heard at the cathedral door, and Mob enters with Ahasuerus and Rachel. The dead welcome Mob as their queen, and she exchanges salutations with the great. Ahasuerus seizes the opportunity to beseech the dead to tell him if they have seen the Christ. No. Have they not seen Jesus of Nazareth with the flaming eyes? No. Have they not heard if He has inquired after a traveller from the Holy Land? No, no, He has asked nothing of us, it is we who have sought Him without finding Him. Do you not know it? There is no Christ, no Jesus of Nazareth. Go, if you will, and mock the living.

Ahasuerus is delighted, for then he is free. He will go and proclaim the good news to the world, and bid them rejoice and be free also. Rachel implores him not to rejoice; believe if he will that this cathedral is heaven, that these cold flags are the carpet of the firmament, but not to rejoice that it is so.

For every word he says breaks her heart. Why is he so afraid of the Christ? but that is a secret he will not disclose. Mob comes to conclude their espousals. Pope Gregory himself stands at the altar to pronounce the nuptial benediction. But when he asks Ahasuerus his name, the unhappy man gasps, he cannot pronounce it. The crowd of dead gather round, watching him, jeering him. The Pope is about to excuse him, when the Christ on the great eastern window suddenly cries out: "It is

Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew." At the sound of this awful voice St. Mark starts in fright, the dead fall as dust, the very cathedral leaps like a horse, and the whole host fly to their tombs, crying, "Cursed be thou, O Ahasuerus." "Blessed be thou, O Ahasuerus," replies Rachel. "Pardon him, Lord; open heaven to him,"—and with this prayer for mercy the act concludes.

One of those personal confidences so characteristic of the poet now intervenes. It resembles the plaintive purling of some rivulet in the depths of the woods. After the extraordinary scenes of the last act, the monotonous melancholy of this interlude calms the mind, and prepares it for a fresh effort.

The fourth day, *the Last Judgment*, is devoted entirely to the future. The roar of cities and of mankind begins to grow feeble. The ocean itself begins to dry up. Doubt, that long has frozen the hearts of all living, has at length penetrated into the very soul of creation. The cry comes, not only from men, but from the flowers, the rivulets, the mountains: "There is no God." Ahasuerus is himself arriving at the last agonies of unbelief. Immortal, he sees himself slowly marching on into the empty nothing. He beseeches Rachel to leave him, and to return to her own home. She refuses: though all lose their faith, she still believes; though all cease to pray, she still prays, and helps Ahasuerus to drink his cup of grief to the dregs.

Finally, the last hour of the world sounds. The dread summons of the angel of judgment is heard everywhere. Awake! awake! The cities are summoned from their tombs. Athens is ready at once, but Rome cannot make up her mind in which dress to appear; she would fain crave an hour's delay, and can hardly believe her time is come. Finally, preceded by the black eagles of the Abruzzi, the vultures of the Apennines, and the wolves of Calabria, and followed by her popes, by the children of her church, and the virgins of her paintings, she wings her way to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Babylon the beautiful is even more tardy; she would remain for ever sleeping beneath the coverlet of her desert. Paris at the sound of the celestial trumpet wakes joyous, and, imagining she hears the clarion of new battles, calls on all the hosts of France to arise, from those of Bouvines and Agincourt, to those that fought at Austerlitz and Waterloo.

Meanwhile human science still goes on revolving its insoluble problems. In the depths of his laboratory, Albert Magnus does not perceive that both the world and his thought have come to an end. Yesterday he fancied that he had hit upon the true method,

to-day it has proved a delusion, but he still believes that he is on the eve of discovering the last word of science. The angel of judgment arrives to tear him from his reverie, and to close his book for ever.

And now the poet himself revives, but it is not the voice of the archangel that awakes him, but those of a choir of women. He sees Sappho, Heloise, Beatrice, the Countess Guiccioli and the like, followed by souls more dream-like—Desdemona, Juliet, Mignon, Virginie, Atala; these pass, and more unsubstantial still come mere voices, but voices of hearts, women's hearts, and among them it is not impossible to detect the voice most dear to the poet, but which he had once feared he should never hear again. That voice pierces him; those tears, falling on his ashes, put life into his heart. His resurrection is perfected.

In the next scene the world is seen in ruins, but the lovers appear to have changed souls. It is no longer Rachel who aspires, but Ahasuerus. Rachel is content to stay on the dying earth if only Ahasuerus is at her side, but not so he. She weeps over the thought of his waning love; he assures her the evil is not one he can cure, it is a soul malady. "When I am most thine, then it is that I hear a voice crying in my ears, 'Further on, further on; thou must plunge into the ocean of love. Further on, further on; thou must go to its very source.' Beneath all my joys there is a pain so bitter, that no kisses can take away its sting. I have thought it would pass away, but it only increases." Rachel tells him his desires are too boundless, it is her fault that she has not known how to satisfy them. No, it is not her fault. To get rid of it, he has adored her in all things, making for himself an eternal Rachel, who should only be his beloved, Rachel still, Rachel always, Rachel everywhere, but he could not delude himself. On the other hand, her highest aspirations now centre alone in him; so completely has he become to her all her heaven and all her paradise, that she would willingly enter hell itself with him. But such devotion has no power to satisfy him. "If, but for an hour, I knew what it was to be loved of heaven, I should be more calm. A thousand chimeras about divine love possess my imagination; if I could but taste it, they would all be dissipated; for it is an overpowering madness that impels me to love something more than love, to adore that of which I do not even know the name. This very evening I could wish to plunge with thee into that infinite sea, to die with thee; yes, that is all I wish: lead thou me to that shore."

Rachel—My Christ is that sea; come, lose thyself there with me.

Ahasuerus—Is His rock very high, is His ocean deep enough to drown two souls?

Rachel—Yes, and every one of their memories.

Ahasuerus—Are you quite sure that I shall never more feel disgust, never more feel this desire that everything inflames, that my heart will at last rest at this bourn?

Rachel—I am sure of it.

Ahasuerus—And that thy God, in this abyss, will for ever suffice me, so that to-morrow I shall not need a greater one to satisfy a profounder desire?

Rachel—No; come, thou wilt never wish any other.

Ahasuerus—Never any other, that is the only thing I doubt.

Rachel—Ah! come then! my God! The earth has no more water, but my tears shall baptize thee. Kneel as when thou didst adore me.

Ahasuerus, falling on his knees, cries: "More tears! thine are too lukewarm. Weep, weep upon my heart; it is there, it is there that I feel the thirst."

And Rachel says within herself: "There, there also it is that thou makest me to die, so that I can never rise again."

In the next scene the dead are heard rising, followed by Mob. Meeting Ahasuerus, she offers him a tomb, where he may rest at ease. But he has no desire for sleep now, and why? He has hope. Mob mocks at the word as that with which she amuses the dying. For what does he hope? A future life! Very modest; and what more? That his Master may pardon him. Mob will hide him under her shadow. But his soul, where will she hide that? Bitter is the scorn she pours on the words soul, spirit, life, love, hope. Life is not possible to those who indulge such reveries. He possesses nothing but what he can see with his eyes. She even sneers at the day of judgment—a little smoke, some ashes, and that will be all.

After this chill from the icy touch of death, comes a scene full of mystic sunshine. The flowers, the birds, the mountains, the ocean, the stars, the women, are all hurrying to judgment. The flowers and the birds are consoled by the mystic rose, the *Mater sanctissima*, the Virgin Mary. The mountains, the ocean, the stars, have doubted, and lose their place in creation; but the women, who have wept, who have toiled, who have loved on without hope, willing to lose their very all for a look from those they love, they are consoled by the Eternal Father Himself, who tells them that they alone have preserved His memory. The earth has been the place of their betrothal, their nuptials shall be in the skies.

Then when all the dead gods, all the dead cities, all the dead peoples, have passed in procession before the Eternal Father; when all have disclosed the secret of their being, and have received from the Judge a word, gentle or severe; when of all that was good in the old universe He has composed his New City, there remains no one to be judged but Ahasuerus and Rachel.

Standing before the judgment seat, the Christ asks Ahasuerus if he is sure that he has gathered up all the sorrow that remained in the world. Yes! Rachel, in sharing his cup, has helped him to drink it to the last drop. Since his task is finished, would he return to his own home? "No," replies Ahasuerus, "I ask life, not repose; instead of the steps of my house on Calvary, I would, without stopping, ascend even with Thee the steps of the universe. Without taking breath, I would make my shoes white with the dust of the stars; ascending, ever ascending from world to world, from heaven to heaven, so that I might see at last the source from whence spring the ages."

The Christ—But who would follow thee?

Voices in the Universe—Not us. . . . .

Rachel—I! I would follow him; my heart is not wearied.

The Christ—That voice has saved thee, Ahasuerus; I bless thee, pilgrim of the worlds to come. Give me back the burden of the sorrows of earth. Let thy step be buoyant; the heavens shall bless thee as the earth once cursed thee. . . . Thou shalt open up the way for the universe that follows thee. The angel who accompanies thee shall never quit thee. If thou art tired, thou shalt sit down on my clouds. Go from life to life, from world to world, from one divine city to another; and when, after eternity, thou shalt, passing from circle to circle, arrive at last at the infinite summit to which all things tend, towards which souls, peoples, stars, and the ages are ever climbing, then thou shalt cry to the star, to the people, to the universe, should they wish to stop: Rise, ever rise, for It is here!

The world promised by the Eternal, created, the mystery finished, nothing more is heard but a sweet harmony of voices and instruments in the new city. The Lyre, whose part it is to chant the future, concludes with an epithalamium celebrating the eternal union of Ahasuerus and Rachel. They are absorbed into one another, and the two lives become one being.

Here we would fain rest, but the poet does not permit us. He has filled our hearts with infinite hope, he has made us see the horizon that Christ sees. In the epilogue the clouds of earth cover it once more, and the future that modern scepticism

öffers is traced in a few bold, remorseless strokes, though not without the presence of a great hope.

The new city has existed a long time; Mary is dead, the angels one after the other have folded their wings; Eternity has closed the eyes of the Father: Jesus remains alone on the firmament. An immense weariness oppresses Him; He wishes to rejoin His Father; He bequeaths the worlds to Eternity, that it may love them in His place: but Eternity knows neither love nor hatred, neither joy nor grief; impassible, it receives the adieus of Jesus, and predicts for Him a new Incarnation, a new Passion, a new Aceldama. In dying once more Jesus will find again, through a greater tomb, a better world, a new heaven. Having buried the Father and the Son in a frozen star, which moves on in solitude and without light, Eternity is for the second time alone. Yet not sufficiently alone; for, weary of the worlds that each day wake it with a sigh, it destroys them. Finally, all things are annihilated, and Eternity remains in its solitary grandeur.

How sad the author felt in thus concluding this powerful work, and how deep the wound was in his own soul, is manifest by its last lines—

"Ici finit le mystère d'Ahasvérus,
Priez pour celui qui l'écrivit."

CHAPTER II.

GRUNSTADT, BADEN. 1834–1835.

"The true rest of man's spirit is in love. When it can find an object that it can really embrace and delight in, then indeed it may forget itself—then it may lose the miserable restlessness of consciousness, and yet live only the more for doing so."
—*Maurice.*

EVERY age has found its voice, and where, in this latter half of the nineteenth century, will the people of Europe and America find a voice more truly expressive of the travail of their souls than this mystery play of "Ahasuerus"? The Wandering Jew is, indeed, an emblem of Humanity through all time, and especially since the Christian era, but never more so than in the present age. The nineteenth century has repeated the sin of Ahasuerus, and its punishment is similar. Moving on at a speed utterly unparalleled, it presses forward, never resting for a moment, but *without hope.* Its enthusiasms have died out, its illusions have vanished, yet change has become its law: all are drawn into the vortex; institutions and parties, supposed to be most conservative, proving the most revolutionary of all.

Never in the long history of humanity did woman exercise such an influence for good as she has done since the Christian era, but never in all the eighteen centuries past has that influence been as great as now. The angel Rachel has really taken upon herself to share man's bitter cup. In every so-called Christian land it is women who show the most courage, who probe the

wound to its depth, who reanimate the sufferer by their sympathy and enthusiasm.

Men call the age impious; but what age ever more intensely felt the want of the divine, ever more intensely longed after God? And this the poet makes more and more the characteristic of his hero, until it swallows up every other. Even in the epilogue, in the midst of what may be called the final word of scepticism, there is profound faith and hope, and that faith and hope centre, after all, in the Christ, and moreover in a revived Christ, that is to say, in a truer, nobler idea of the Christ. For it must always be borne in mind that the author of "Ahasuerus" does not attempt to display the real Christ, the Christ of the Gospels and of St. Paul, but the Christ of the Middle Age—the awful, unlovable Christ of judgment. It is the vision of that Christ that he represents as passing away, and to be replaced by this truer, nobler idea.

Nevertheless the epilogue is a terrible passage, and must chill every heart. But let not the reader accuse Quinet of impiety. He is not the first who has sought to make men comprehend the madness of their course by forcing them to realise, without any intervening steps, the horror of the final catastrophe. And this method Quinet no doubt felt was peculiarly needed in dealing with German scepticism, for it was its characteristic to lead men on by such a number of imperceptible steps, that they became as completely oblivious to the condition into which they had fallen as any victim of Comus after he had quaffed the luscious draught.

"The knot of beliefs in Germany," he says, "has been slowly untied, poetry having for a long time held the place of religion. The Church has fallen, but the hymn remained. By continually putting Art in the place of Faith, the image in the place of the Idea, a shadow in the place of God, Germany has been able, without a single shock, to lull its past into forgetfulness, and to bury it without a sigh."

In his treatise on the "Progress of Scepticism in Germany" he traces the steps in this decline.

"Before arriving at indifference to every creed, Germany had tried them all in turn. When the letter began to wear out, she re-established it by accepting the creed in its spirit; but the spirit, already ruined by mysticism, went the same way as the letter. When the end of her faith had come, she was reconverted by philosophy. Then this hollow earth broke down in the nihilism of Hegel, and another god had to be made. For a time patriotism became a religion; faith was retempered in blood, and *Te Deums* rose to the God of battles, but this faith was quickly dissipated. Then Art became worship, until Goethe, its high priest, himself destroyed its altar.

"It was Goethe," he says, "who made Germany conscious how far she had gone from the old faith. Attacking nothing, defending nothing, admitting, affirming all things; under this universal belief was hid a universal doubt. Goethe's philosophy, apparently the very opposite to that of Voltaire, led to the same result. For a long time men refused to see in Goethe anything more than the revelation of the interior state of an individual soul; time and rude shocks have been necessary to show that he really represented the entire nation.

"For years Germany was in a magnetic sleep; the writings of the brothers Schlegel threw an appearance of calm over the surface of things, disguising the evil. Germany tried everything in order to avoid looking at its wound. Some of its thinkers fled into the cloister, or were converted to the Church of Rome; others tried to get rid of their new-born scepticism by playing with it, forgetting that it would grow and sting them to the heart. But if Tieck thus helped to popularise doubt, Voss did infinitely more to overturn old German beliefs by the way in which he attacked the principle upon which all German thought rested. Voss, he says, did not see that, in destroying the principle of symbolism, he destroyed at the same time the very ground of German life. This learned peasant took from the past its poetry, little dreaming that in so doing he killed the present. He did not perceive that the cathedrals in which Protestantism worships to-day had their foundations in the Greek basilicas, the basilicas in the temples, the temples of Greece in those of the East, and that, therefore, it was not possible to overturn one of these stages without the whole edifice of human faith at once breaking down. However, Voss was successful in gaining over the philosophy of the day, and so captivating the heart of Germany. Schelling's philosophy,

until then in the ascendant, took refuge in Catholicism; and from the bosom of the papacy came the boldest attempt in appearance to preserve life. But the efforts of Baader and Goerres were useless, for what they sought to reanimate was neither a religion nor a philosophy. Then the idealistic philosophy dead, as its greatest leaders Hegel and Schelling, the German people were left to that real world for which they had become so hungry.

"And now," he goes on to say, "in the degree that Germany becomes more sensual, she forms codes of ostentatious severity. A hard methodism has arisen in place of the lost serenity of faith, which pretends, by force of maxims, to get rid of the danger, troubling the pure souls of which the country is still full. Nothing shows more the disintegration of the old beliefs than the rise from time to time in the public conscience of these sect-phantoms."

Finally, he notes how, during the War of Independence, it seemed as if faith might once more be reanimated by a breath from heaven; but the kings in their selfishness dashed this gleam of hope, and now Germany has sunk to the last stage of unbelief, and jeers with Heinrich Heine at all it once loved, while it loves all that it once hated. For the poems of Heine he sees a significance truly social.

"Careless and frivolous in form, these charming flowers of poetry, fresh as wild roses, possess a venom that it has taken centuries to distil. For it is Heine's peculiarity to hide the dregs of our age under the sweet and innocent forms of primitive times, the age of Byron under that of Hans Sachs. It is this mingling of innocence and corruption, this dressing out despair in the language of hope, this death that speaks like life, this honey and gall, that makes these poems little masterpieces of art, whimsical, original, immoral.

"The earliest of them dates from 1817. Each year the sting grew sharper and pierced deeper. Written in various lands, the only songs that bear the impress of the climate are those composed on the shores of the North Sea. There his irony becomes colossal like the genii of the place; from the clouds of the Baltic he makes a winding-sheet in which he wraps all the gods, living and dead, and mocks them in their grave. He quits you there with an epigram, so that you feel in closing this book so apparently frivolous, that all nature is empty, heaven a desert, and

that all the fruits of the tree of life have been spoilt by a poisoned sting; the worm consumes them."

It was the sight of this great descent from Luther to Goethe, from Goethe to Heine, that weighed so heavily on Quinet's soul, and, stirring within him the prophetic fire, compelled him to portray the religious future of Germany and of all Christendom in this awful epilogue.

However, Quinet is no pessimist; he still has unbounded hope.

"The ideal," he says, "still lives, notwithstanding the instability of the real. We live in the thought of what ought to be and what will be. The conscience of the human race is forming itself. Its ideals are passing away; from being many and merely national, they tend to become one, and that one universal. The leader in this great work will be the poet of the future. He will have to be the mediator of the coming peoples. His word will belong exclusively to none. He is already the legislator of the great European confederation that is to be. Yet he will as ever demand faith, and that faith will have to be strained to the uttermost. The Columbus of the new ideal world, he goes forth alone upon the ocean of thought. Onward he sails, only to find the infinite ever increasing. Still he pursues his way, though what seemed land prove cloud, what hope, mere illusion. To the popular cry, 'Let us turn back,' he will only answer, 'To-morrow!' and to-morrow will prove an age. Tempest-tossed he may be, but he will not furl his sail until he has touched that shore where life has its source, and which is called Eternity."

How these last words remind us of the final destiny of Ahasuerus, in which for ever rising until he reaches the summit whither all are tending, he cries to the stars, to the peoples, to the universe: Rise! for ever rise! for it is here! And if the poet represents among us the Eternal Man, forerunner of the universe, the *rôle* was never more conscientiously played than by Edgar Quinet.

Like his great antitype, the pilgrim of the worlds to come, before he commences his task he becomes one with his good angel. Our poet found repose at last in union

with her who had been the model of the angel Rachel, that perfect type of the feminine nature. Yet, as in the play itself, there had been a time when, in spite of all her love, his betrothed had been herself driven to add to his wounds. Of a faith, childlike and sincere, when she found upon what a sea of doubt he had set sail, she shrank from linking her fate with his, and began to think that she must sacrifice her lover to her God. But as the mystery closes, so ended this trial, and Edgar Quinet was married to Minna Moré in a Protestant Church, near Grunstadt, on the 21st of December 1834.

Early in the same month he published what may be called his "Epithalamium." The Church of Brou, the sole object of artistic interest connected with the poet's native town of Bourg, was erected at the moment when Europe was breaking away from the asceticism of the Middle Age, and is itself a striking monument of the new tendency.

"It may be affirmed," says our author, "that in no other place does architecture so lend itself to purely personal sentiments. It has succeeded in translating the tongue of Petrarch, and so giving a form in stone to the most melodious part of the love of the Middle Age. From the depth of the sanctuary the prayer of Heloise goes forth from the lips of the Church with a thousand memories of love and a thousand terrestrial regrets which have taken a body in the stone and in the marble.

"It is no longer the cathedral, sad and cloud-capped, upon which the storm has beaten for ages, and which for ever remains kneeling before the empty sepulchre of the Lord. It is rather a Beatrice or a Laura who seats herself on the road to heaven, thinking of the perfume of her terrestrial love. The Church of Brou is architecturally the expression of the ideal holiness of love and marriage, as poetry and dogma had consecrated them in the Middle Age.

"It is a domestic epic containing the whole private life of the time. The title of this paper is: "On the Arts of the Renaissance and the Church of Brou."

It was in the neighbourhood of this church, so pecu-



Certines

From an Original Drawing by Edgar Quinet's Mother.

To face p. 183.

liarly dedicated to holy matrimony, that Edgar Quinet intended to bring his wife and fix his home. Certines, the ancestral home, was not more than five miles, as the crow flies, from Brou; and during the summer of 1834 he was here preparing the old place for the reception of his bride.

It was a little retreat, poetic enough, very simple and very humble. The lower part was occupied by some country people, who had lived there from father to son, and who were ever ready to give a helping hand. The upper part looked over a balcony upon a scene full of repose, with the mountains in the distance. In the stable was a carriage and a pair of horses; no sign, however, of the poet's wealth, but an absolute necessity in such an out-of-the-way place. However, the scheme was given up. Nothing but the smallness of his means could have ever made him think of living there; for, as he continually says, it was a most unhealthy district, a district in which the deaths exceeded the births. Two years later the place was sold, and Edgar Quinet and his wife took up their abode at Baden, chiefly because it was suitable for foreigners and a cheap place to live in. Subsequently they went to live at the foot of a mountain in the neighbourhood of Heidelberg.

At Baden he is writing "Napoleon," a work he calls his "Goliah in verse." He had commenced it some time before his marriage. In the February of 1835 the work is about to be published, when the whole impression was destroyed by fire. However, this is nothing more than a vexatious delay; "Ahasuerus" has sold well, and another edition is called for. Learned M. Fauriel wants Edgar Quinet to supply his place at the Sorbonne, with the idea of succeeding him in his professorship. Altogether, things begin to look prosperous. The life he now leads is so different from the wandering, unsatisfied existence that he had led for so many years, that he is quite surprised at his own happiness, and feels

like a man raised from the dead. His mother is reconciled to his marriage, and he writes to her concerning his wife:—

"The more I see the more I venerate and cherish her virtues, which are those of a saint. I thank heaven every day for having given her to me. It is she who has cured the infinite plague of my heart; my life is entirely changed by her. My only desire is to render her happy; each day confirms the sentiments of love and affection I entertain for her."

CHAPTER III.

BADEN. 1835–1836.

"I have a right to answer all your complaints by an eternal I. I am a person apart; I will not be dictated to by any one."
—*Napoleon to Josephine* (*vide* "Memoirs de M. de Rémusat").

THE thought that was in Edgar Quinet's mind at this time was to produce a Trilogy: three poems bearing relation one to the other, and showing Humanity in its three great forms—general, individual, religious. As "Ahasuerus" represented the race,—the Eternal Man,—"Napoleon" was to represent the individual—the hero; and "Prometheus," which as yet was *in petto*, the martyr. If, he said, the tie that binds these three poems together could have been made plain from the beginning, many attacks might have been repelled, especially those accusing the earlier one of an irreligious tendency.

In no character, ancient or modern, does the individual come out more completely than in that of Napoleon. Arthur and Charlemagne have both become the subjects of epics, but in neither of them was the individuality so overpowering as to obscure their contemporaries. Arthur's glory is inseparable from that of his knights, as is Charlemagne's from that of his paladins. But who speaks of Napoleon and his marshals? Napoleon has long ago absorbed all the military glory of his age; and not only its military, but its political and legal glory. It may be perfectly true that this, as much else in his career, is a prodigious usurpation, but

it only proves how overpowering was the individuality that could thus blot out from the minds of men the unparalleled devotion of his armies, the ability of his generals, and the sagacity of his statesmen and legists.

> "The peoples slept, and in a night the deed was done.
> Day broke, a single man stood up before the sun;
> His shadow covered all, the glory fell on him;
> Behind him lay the world, a mass obscurely dim.
> A thousand names are lost that one may fill the skies,
> A thousand waves have sunk that one alone may rise." [1]

But in addition to a poem manifesting the individual in Humanity, Edgar Quinet wished to write the epic of the democratic period in French history. And of this period Napoleon was as distinctly the hero as Charlemagne was of its feudal period.

In his "Field of the Battle of Waterloo," Quinet asks, "Was it only the cause of a man that was defeated on that occasion?" No, he replies, "it was the Revolution that was beaten at Waterloo." The Revolution brought France into such a condition of antagonism to all the powers of Europe, that to preserve her independence she was obliged to create a dictatorship. The old and the new world could not coexist. War was a necessity of national existence; the Convention, the Directory, the Consulship, the Empire, were mainly military machines. National independence, Quinet ranks before everything. A naked tyranny born of the soil is preferable to liberty imported into a country by the foreigner. Napoleon began as the servant of France fighting for the national cause; in the struggle that cause becomes the cause of Humanity, the cause of the new world against the old; then he began to feel vaguely his new position, to regard himself as the champion of a new civilisation, and he sought to make it triumph with all the energy of a new Mohammed even in the East itself. Whatever his faults, he represented the Revolution; and when he fell, the Revolution fell.

[1] The First Consul.

If, then, the poet discovers a certain enthusiasm for the giant-man, we must remember that he sees in him the hero of the French Revolution, and the spirit of France incarnate. This does not, however, in the least affect Quinet's conscience. No one could describe more powerfully the heartless nature of his hero's ambition, or the world-wide misery it caused; no one could raise a more stirring note of national indignation against his tyranny, or make the Nemesis which pursued his career more strikingly manifest.

Besides, there were peculiar reasons why Quinet should feel intensely about this epoch in French history. Its close in disgrace and ruin was coincident with that period in his life when impressions are stamped indelibly on the imagination; the Invasion was burnt into his brain and heart. Moreover, we have seen how his residence in Germany had forced him to comprehend the depth of the animosity against France, and the sure and certain end to which it was tending. To awaken his countrymen out of the fool's paradise into which he believed the temporising policy of the citizen king was leading them, was then not a small part of his aim.

In his criticism of this poem, Sainte-Beuve says: "In an epic on Napoleon, the Napoleon of Talleyrand ought to appear as well as that of the Champagne peasant; the part due to popular imagination should be kept in its place, coming to light here and there, but without hiding the real events and the historic situation." But he is not correct if he means that Quinet has been careless of the latter; for while preserving throughout the popular legendary impression of his hero, he brings out clearly enough Napoleon's cynical indifference to right, his towering selfishness, and cold-hearted disregard of everything else in the world but his own glory. To prove it, nearly the whole series of poems would have to be named, but it is specially manifest in *The Desert*, *The First Consul*, *Austerlitz*, *Montebello*, and *The Letter*. From *The Fête* one might

suppose the poet had read the revelations of Madame de Rémusat, so vivid an idea does it give of the selfish, vulgar, masquerading despot in private life.

"That which," Sainte-Beuve considers, "constitutes the merit, the life of the poem, is, after the greatness of the enterprise and the length of the course it runs, the moving powerful poetry that circulates through it all as the air over vast elevated places, or as the spirit upon the waters," and above all, a certain number of very fine pieces which seem to secure to Edgar Quinet a style of his own.

The form into which he has thrown his poem, and the variety of the versification, preserve it from that heavy monotony into which the greatest epic poems tend to fall. Instead of being one long poem, each subject is complete in itself, one object being that they might readily be recited or sung.

The italics in the following summary mark the titles of the various poems.

NAPOLEON.

A POEM.

The Cradle (I.) refers to the Isle of Corsica. *Madame Letitia* (II.) describes the mother of the young Napoleon. She grieves over the domestic misfortunes, and is wondering what career awaits her son, in whom she already sees extraordinary character. She consults a gipsy who comes to the house by moonlight. In a series of oracular utterances *the Bohemian* (III.) foretells the future history of the boy. His hand feels to her "like an iron weight," and in the entangled lines she sees "battles stern, and deeds of awe." In what Sainte-Beuve calls a veritable ballad, true, natural, powerful in design, and under a tone of lamentation still noble, touching, and grand, is dimly foreshadowed the campaign in Italy, the bridge of Arcole, the triumph of ambition in the East, the Empire, the subjugation of all the monarchs in Europe, the Nemesis at Moscow, the pursuit of the Cossacks, the Abdication, Elba, the Return, Waterloo, and, finally, the grave at St. Helena.

The Adieu (IV.) represents the future hero departing from Corsica in a storm, joyfully bidding farewell to his mother and sisters, welcoming the wind that fills the sail, and the sea-horses

that chafe to carry him away. In the dark night the young voyager sees a single star. *The Star* (v.) is his; it shines only for him, loving to touch with its golden fingers the long hair hanging over his shoulders, through which the breeze passes and sleeps.

The metre changes with the next poem. In it the poet recalls the vigour, the disinterestedness of the men of *the Republic* (vi.). France as an immortal Thebes, a popular Sion, is besieged night and day by the whole world. Of her long-haired heroes, Joubert, Desaix, Hoche, Marceau, she asks who is the most valiant, the strongest amongst them, that he may become her master, little dreaming that over the high Apennines a young Corsican is passing who will be the Cæsar, not only of herself, but of the world.

A battle under the Republic, and the sentiment that animated the troops, is well given in *the song of the bridge of Arcole* (vii.). On a morning in November the trembling marsh wakes up at Ronco; its willows casting sad shadows, its reeds bending their grey heads in the north wind. A little stream, crossed by a narrow bridge, separates the popular army from that of the king's. Over the narrow bridge the peoples rush breathlessly, until a great crowd of dead bar the way. Then they spring into the water, and soon its wan floods are streaming over blue coats pierced in a hundred places. On the field of hope the new standard has lost its lance, and the waters of Arcole recoil on their bed. Then a pale horseman darts from the *mêlée;* leaping off his saddle, he takes the tricolour in his arms, and rushing on to the bridge, waves it above the creaking planks. The sabres glance from his forehead, the cannon lick the dust at his feet. On his path the trembling nations follow, and from the midst of the reeds of Ronco the standard of liberty has cast its shadow over the world. At this sign the peoples recognise their master. Before they had feared him, now they loved him. But the kings weep, for their long past flies away, the abyss is bridged at Arcole, and the path opened to the human race.

The next poem is a cry of those who have fallen in Italy. In this *Song of the Dead* (viii.) the poet is urged with the wine of their combats to intoxicate France. The stern remorseless conqueror now begins to show himself. A silent messenger is seen approaching *Venice* (ix.). Who is this messenger, paler than the night? with eyes like an antique lamp in an alabaster vault, with mouth that never smiles, with heart that neither loves nor hates, but like some great fire hides itself at daylight under the half-warm cinders. The sea smiles at this messenger of death, but the beautiful city of twenty centuries knows that her hour has come.

Two letters in verse now follow. *The Message* (x.) is from

Josephine to Napoleon, upbraiding him for his neglect, and entreating him to give up the phantom—glory. Napoleon in *the Answer* (XI.) declares that, far from returning, he has only just commenced his career. God has put His hammer into his hands that he may strike the earth. He must go to the East; there his eagle shall make its nest. To depict the wonderful fascination that the name of Bonaparte already exercises in the East, is the intention of the three poems that follow. The Pyramids (XII.) await their master; they ask all things of his coming—the wind from Italy, the stormy sea, the storks that rest on their summits. In a dream *the Pacha* (XIII.) of Damascus sees the head of the Sultan Kebir at his saddle-bow; he is in sunny Provence, scaling old chateaux, where the Christian dogs keep their treasures, and then sailing home with their women bound to the masts of his vessel. Leading his *camel* in the night, the *driver* (XIV.) sings of Bonnaberdi, the lion without a mane, the sultan without a turban, whose wives are forty battles, whose black eunuchs, with their shining poignards, are more than a hundred combats.

A Mohammedan Imaum (XV.) proclaims a holy war. Allah is greater than the Sultan Kebir. He knows how to lead these lions of the desert to a dry source, and to overwhelm them under the Simoom. But in the next poem a *doleful cry* (XVI.) rises up from the Mamelukes after their defeat at Embabeh.

And now the poet arrives at a great crisis in his hero's life. In *the Desert* (XVII.) Napoleon decides his future, deliberately preferring the Evil to the Good. Power rather than Duty is henceforth to be his object.

> Come thou, my soul, into this silent land;
> Forget all thought of fame and kneeling crowds,
> And here, alone, let us debate this point,—
> What shall my future be? But first of all
> Tell if thou canst why everywhere my foes
> Fall at a breath, submissive at my feet;—
> Who am I then? a man, or more than man;
> A prophet, or perchance a demi-god
> Who of his ruins builds himself an altar
> And makes a worship. Solve the mystery,
> Jupiter Ammon, god of these arid sands,
> Am I divine as thy renowned son,
> Great Alexander? Like to him in will,
> Like him the phantom glory here I seek.
> The world has lost its way, and in its night
> It wants a guide to hold it by the hand;
> From Rhine to Nile it follows all my steps,
> Until at last behind these moving sands
> I fade from sight; then like a child it cries,
> Where has he gone? My master! is he lost?

The hour with issues infinite, now strikes.
Rise up my fortune, rise my genius, rise!
And here, in this oasis, look around thee.
Who is it says: Thou, thou shalt be a king?
Speaks the oasis? No! Go, look within
Thyself, there shines the coming diadem.
How oft in my own mind have dreams been crowned,
How oft my glory rose upon those floods
And soon made shipwreck! What is then that voice
That rises in my heart and dies away?
Is this the voice that men call destiny?

. . . . . .

Two worlds appear, as in all else I see;
Cæsar or Brutus? here the question lies.
Brutus loved right, but Cæsar filled the world;
Brutus was stainless, Cæsar stood alone;
Brutus, a victim, fell slain for his faith,
While tyrant Cæsar gave the world his law.
Cæsar means Power, Brutus only Virtue.
Conclude, my soul, the balance kicks the beam;
Brutus being mortal, may but chance to live;
I will be Cæsar—Cæsar, god on earth!

General Bonaparte has known his hour, and has leapt on the horse Opportunity. He is named *the First Consul* (XVIII.), and his triumph is celebrated with old Roman pomp and circumstance. One man has become all, the rest nothing. Oh, for the old consul with the tawny eye! His work has always to be redone. Slavery is for ever reappearing. The peoples have become gladiators, sold to amuse their Cæsar; and running before his car, they shout: "Ave! great Cæsar, those about to die salute thee!"

Yet the first consul appears as one truly great. He watches as a sentinel over the new society, and spends his nights in preparing for it a new code, astonishing old legists by the ease with which he sees his way through their entanglements. Moreover, his military glories are still unexhausted. *St. Bernard* (XIX.) celebrates the passage over the Alps, and contains some fine descriptions of Alpine scenery.

In the old cathedral a bloody *Te Deum* (XX.) is chanted, but it is not from the living that it arises, but from the dead, who sing to Sabaoth, Lord of Hosts. "Nothing," says Sainte-Beuve, "could be better imagined or felt than such a pacific, compassionate, and pious chant from the mouth of the dead, while the living ignore the miseries of the past, believe in nothing, and are going anew to tear each other in pieces."

The next poem describes how the Pope is brought to France, and the part that he plays in *the Coronation* (XXI.) of Napoleon. The ceremonies over, the organ begins to sound, and from its

strains bursts forth a solemn warning. Belshazzar's feast is recalled,[1] and the proud *Imperator* is asked if he does not fear to see the hand upon the wall; let him drink his brimming cup, and in the dregs he shall find the bitter taste of Waterloo; let him set sail on the vast sea of human hope, defying winds and waves, and yet shall he ever hear, like some distant sigh, the waves falling on the shores of St. Helena.

The Coronation is the prelude to a new series of battles. They open with a fine poem called *the Bivouac* (XXII.). Men and horses appear swarming over the snow like a flock of larks in January. A voice says "halt!" and the iron host lie down with the silence of a funeral. The fires of the bivouac redden the horizon; all sleep—it is a night of strange dreams. In a furrow the Emperor rests on some straw, wrapped in the folds of an immense cloak. In the early hours of the morning a great battle passes through his brain. He awakes his marshals; he promises his soldiers rest on the morrow; never indeed shall a heavier slumber weigh on their eyelids. *Austerlitz* (XXIII.) is the battle promised. The Emperor, mounting his horse, reviews his army. He speaks to the men individually. What is your name? your number of fights? An enthusiastic hurrah arises from the troops. Then the battle begins, while he, as some giant, stands stirring the fire in the plain below, takes up his people by handfuls and casts them into it. The fire spreads, the hamlets all round are in flames, and their roofs crackle on the monster's hearth.

One messenger arrives after another. The rear-guard has fled. "Sire, cover your flanks;" "Sire, your wing gives way;" "Sire, all is lost! Lannes is drowned in his blood!" Then, like a water-snake, Napoleon moves under the grass and crushes the Muscovite serpent at the bottom of the lake. Finally, Murat appears, followed by an army of prisoners, their heads drooping as they think of their homes, of their little ones, and of their wild horses in the steppes of the Ukraine.

The only being that watches upon a battlefield *the Day after* (XXIV.) the fight is the Vulture. But the Emperor passes, and looking upon the dead, he places his hand on their bodies. Then their spirits wake up, and kissing his garments they wonder whether they are in the desert, or in the skies, or under the willows of Arcole. What is this aureole which hovers round

[1] "Some years later, at another *fête* given by the city of Paris to the Emperor, . . . over the throne which he was to occupy were placed in letters of gold the following words from the Holy Scriptures: 'I am that I am.' And no one seemed to be scandalised!"—*Memoirs of Madame de Rémusat*, vol. i. p. 336.

their brows? But suddenly they catch sight of the gaping wound, and fall weeping on the grass. None see these spirits save the masterless horses, who with manes bristling with terror fly in the night from the beasts of carrion.

Yet one arises to do better than blindly adore. It is Lannes, Duc de *Montebello* (XXV.), the Emperor's friend. He expostulates with his master, representing to him the wretchedness of the peoples. Napoleon has attained the impossible, why torture Europe any longer? Like a vicious horse it may one day pitch him out of the saddle. The nations lick his hand, but in secret they curse him. He is depopulating his own land; he will at last find himself alone in the midst of its emptiness.

The Emperor smiles, he possesses the world; Lannes shall have what he will. But Montebello cares for none of his honours; all he desires is a grave, a grassy mound where the wind sighs. But Napoleon will give him a monument of bronze cannon, a high column from whence he shall look down smiling under a heavy crown. The hero turns away weeping, and with slow steps seeks his tent.

From his camp at Wagram the Emperor pens *a Letter* (XXVI.) to the Empress. God, he says, has had him in His holy keeping; so now he orders a *Te Deum* to be chanted at Nôtre Dame; then he proceeds to give a list of the arms, the standards, the cannon his armies have taken, and to describe how Europe is in chains and peace signed. The standards and the flag, still damp with the blood of Lannes, are to be hung up in the Invalides, and a bronze column is to be set up in his Place Vendôme, beneath which are to repose the ashes of the Duc de Montebello. On its sides all Napoleon's battles are to appear climbing up to the feet of their great general, who will stand above all, watching the world as countless ages roll away. All is to be of bronze, even the tears of the soldiers. In remarkable keeping with its subject, the poem itself seems to rise like a bronze column, every line and every word falling with a metallic monotony like the hammer of some military builder.

The news of Napoleon's glory bring Dona Letitia and her daughters from Corsica. The Emperor will see that *the Sisters* (XXVII.) are married; they shall each bear the name of one of his battles; his brothers shall be kings, each one shall have a leaden sceptre dripping with gore. Napoleon, with pale brow, leans pensive. He feels that he has come to the edge of the precipice where every man in his turn plants his feet and glides. He sees the gulf below, but *Vertigo* (XXVIII.) has seized him, and he must follow. May he not have an hour to enjoy the height of his prosperity? No, the path is too slippery. Then at the same moment he must receive the welcome of prosperity

and its adieu. Yet what wonders has he wrought for the human race? He has closed chaos, closed its night profound. But, after all, was he its master? did another Will than his direct his power, or was he the chance which men call Providence? Yes, he will amuse himself by his dream. He is tired of monotonous happiness; he would taste misfortune, know what it is like. Is it, after all, so bitter? As high as he has mounted he would now descend, and sound the depths of the abyss. For by his fall his glory would be increased; the world without its guide would cry, "I am lost;" the orphan peoples would not know how to clothe themselves or to find their destiny.

The Pope, standing with his cardinals on the balcony of St. Peter's, his shining mitre rising above the Eternal City, pronounces, in the name of the thrice holy One, an Anathema (XXIX.) on Napoleon Bonaparte of Corsica. He, the scourge of the jealous God, yesterday but dust, shall again become dust to-morrow. Since he thinks to set himself above all law, to close his ears to the cry of the world, he shall be cast down from his high Babel. A curse shall fall upon him, upon his tent, his treasure, his palace, upon his bed and his dreams, upon his sceptre, his name and his inheritance, upon his house, and even upon his grave.

The next poem opens brilliant as the last has closed severe and terrible. It is called *the Fête*[1] (XXX.). In a palace under floods of light, upon a blue carpet beneath a canopy, sit the Emperor and the Empress. Charming in her rubies and ebony tresses, she is yet sad and ready to weep. Turning to her husband, she entreats him not to leave her for the daughter of a king. "Josephine," he coldly replies, "it is necessary. I must have an heir to my empire." "Have you not sons? children of your thought—Austerlitz, Friedland. Daughters? Montenotti, Rivoli, Lodi." But he is inexorable, and she is ready to die. "They see you, Madame; smile, Madame, smile, in the name of God."

Saragossa (XXXI.) is a stirring national poem. It is one of the finest of the series, recalling by its spirit, its enthusiasm, and its whole tone, Macaulay's noble ballad, "The Spanish Armada." Saragossa besieged, calls on all its sister cities, by name, to hasten to her relief; and not only the cities, but all else, animate and inanimate, in Spain. Then the deserts, landes, sierras, gorges, defiles, grottoes, lakes, seas, forests, houses—yea,

[1] France was given up at this time to *fêtes* and merry-making (*Memoirs of Madame de Rémusat*, vol. i. p. 337). Then follows a description of one at the Opera House, that accords so closely with this poem that Quinet might himself have witnessed it.

even the broken walls, as well as all the Hidalgoes and the saints of Spain—all, all unite with the cities, and come crying, "Death! Death!" The old kings of Spain rise in their graves, and the bishop of Grenada, quitting his shroud, hurries, pale and wan, along the road of the Sierras, until he reaches the highest peak in the Alpujarras, where in a grand litany he calls upon all the saints to pray for Spain.

And now, having got the Corsican bull in the arena, they sorely wound him. At last the toreador cries out, "Shall I kill him, Hidalgo?" Then from the vast amphitheatre in which the peoples have watched the fight, from Mount Ural and Mount Carmel to Valentia, a great shout comes, gathering force as it runs from the Caspian to the Atlantic, "Let him die! let him die!"

Napoleon has come to *Moscow* (XXXII.) to make a last throw for fortune; he will rule and reign in this new land, and it may be that on the pillow of the Czars he will sigh away his soul. But at the sound of his footsteps entering the holy city, its high towers shiver with anger and its golden cupolas howl as a panther insulted in its lair. Ere long the catastrophe develops; the minarets, the domes, are wrapped in flames; all the roofs come crashing in at once, and the city appears a vast lake of fire. Then, by a series of powerful images, the poet makes his reader a spectator of this unique horror. Sainte-Beuve has especially noted this poem:—

"The picture of semi-oriental barbarism, the prey of the roaring flames; these tottering minarets, which the evening before, under their snowy turbans, dreamt of the Bosphorus; the great tower of Saint-Ivan, which, as it burns and melts, contorts itself like a witch over her immense cauldron,—these," he says, "are recognisable images, solemn marks that consecrate the brow of the poet."

> The work is done,—a kingdom passed away;
> A silent night succeeds a furious day.
> Among the ruins vast, but one alone,
> An Emperor, stands up; without a groan
> He on the wonder looks, while in his ear
> Thus speaks the voice of God these words of fear:
> "Thus into smoke shall fade thy best-planned schemes,
> Thus fall thy empire, thy ambitious dreams;
> Thus tumble down the Babel of thy glory,
> Thus come to nothing all thy wondrous story,
> Thus heaven will dissipate thy name in gloom—
> Thy work a wreck, thine end an exile's tomb."

Near the Sea of Azov a Hettman wakes at break of day; he seeks his horse and his arms, but he knows not whither he is going. Led by the winds of the Ural, and followed by his

brothers, he passes mountain and plain, and comes into a land so cold that his very sabre shivers. The wanderers pass Kief, Moscow, Borodino, Smolenski, and arrive at the banks of *the Beresino* (XXXIII.). Here they see a strange sight: a great number of horsemen in cloaks, covered with snow, are sitting motionless; waggons loaded with recumbent figures seem stopping the way, fixed in the deep ruts by the river side. Cannon are there, but all covered with rime, and as they approach nearer they see many dead fires with grenadiers stretched around. Why do these soldiers sleep in the cold and tempest? It is too late to awake them now, they have reached their journey's end. Of their sufferings, ere they did so, a terrible picture is drawn.

> Pale by the roadside, in the fading light,
> The crowd was seated,—came another night,
> And paler still it there remained. Anew
> The day broke, and of yet more pallid hue
> It now appeared, while ghastly lay around
> Half-eaten horses, frozen to the ground.

In the following poem a solitary *traveller* (XXXIV.) is seen; his horse neighs not, neither champs the bit, but horse and rider pass on like a shadow. He is the harbinger of the shipwreck. When this pale fugitive enters his own kingdom, the guards who watch the frontier do not recognise him. What seek you? What is your name? And the horseman replies, "I am Napoleon."

But again the Emperor is in Paris showing his infant, "*the King of Rome*" (XXXV.), to the gaping crowd. Their noise, and that of the swords drawn from their scabbard, frightens the child, and it clings to the neck of its father.

The terrible poem called *Leipsic* (XXXVI.) is a companion one to that of Saragossa. It sings the rising of a hundred nations, a whole people,—the Germans,—who unite as one man to crush the giant of armies. It is a veritable song of blood; its refrain is, "Hurrah, the sabre thirsts! list to its rage!" The three days of Leipsic, when without food or sleep the struggle continued, is depicted with immense power; and the intensity of the whole is heightened by the dreamy stanzas that open the poem, in which a solitary sentinel of the French army in the Rhine country is again and again interrogated as to what he sees and hears. Nothing at first; then the distant sounds are but a dream; finally he wakes up to find the world upon them.

Leipsic is followed by a lament over *Poniatowski* (XXXVII.), and the hopes of Poland drowned with him in the Elster. In *Champ-Aubert* (XXXVIII.) all Europe appears combining against

France. The flood is rising, it grows into a lake; the lake becomes a sea, a sea of immense grief for France. This dolorous state of things arouses the poet to lash the flagging patriotism of his countrymen in a poem called *the Sting* (XXXIX.). It is this poem that has caused Quinet to be spoken of as the Uhland and Kœrner of France.

But the course of events now hurries on from one ruin to another. Napoleon, pallid and uncovered, stands at the door of his palace of *Fontainebleau* (XL.), and bids adieu to his battle-fields with their braying trumpets, their flags, their eagles, their soldiers. He no longer has a kingdom, he is now only a name; and to-morrow his story will be told in every cottage in Europe.

And now France has to endure the degradation that she had inflicted on other lands, and to feel herself the miseries of *an Invasion* (XLI.). They are dead who would have defended the country—dead in Egypt, in Russia, by the Rhine, and in Spain—and their leader is discrowned and mute. In their place arrive pale horsemen, speaking a strange tongue, their swords dripping with blood, and the manes of their horses white with the hoar frost. They enter the houses without salutation; they seat themselves by the firesides and empty every cup. Woe! woe! beneath the invaders' feet all things dry up; they may grow again, and the nightingale once more sing among the willows, but the traces of their footsteps can *never* be effaced.

The melancholy of the last poem is relieved by the bright and joyous character of the one that follows, the *Isle of Elba* (XLII.). It opens with a picture of the Mediterranean in spring-time. A white sail is seen mounting on the waves, a corsair with three masts. Another vessel follows its path, as the sparrow-hawk, the swallow. Your name? Isle of Elba. Your port? France. What do you carry? A man. Who is he? Silence! Your flag? The tricolour. Adieu! go on your way. The voyager lands; as one shipwrecked, he has nothing but his name. Yet at that name the kings are terrified. At that name a hundred gates open, a hundred iron eagles fly to meet him; and from belfry to belfry, even to the towers of Notre Dame, the welcome sounds forth: 'Tis he! 'tis he! who returns in glory and will reign over us again. Let us give him back his crown, and we will give him our blood. We will weave for him robes of victory, and he shall nourish us with his glory. And the demi-god says, "Clothe yourselves in might, soldiers and people, for to-morrow I lead you once more to battle."

That battle is *Waterloo*, and to this great crisis in his epic the poet devotes four songs. The Shepherds (XLIII.), The Storm (XLIV.), The Trumpets (XLV.), and The Horsemen (XLVI.). In the following attempt to give an idea of the scope and spirit

of this portion of the work, a stanza or two containing its leading thoughts have been turned into verse, with a few words showing their connection :—

The bluet mingles with the yellow corn
At Waterloo, and up at early dawn,
Before the labourers come, those saucy thieves,
The larks, a meal have stolen 'mongst the sheaves.

Who will the reapers be to-day, what sort
Of harvest-work will in this field be wrought?
Within the vale is hid from all above
A silent farm.[1] Save when the rustic dove[2]
Coos o'er its brood, or when its stones are ground
Beneath the loaded waggon,[3] else no sound
Disturbs its peace. How that long line of trees[4]
In the pale distance trembles in the breeze!

In Hougoumont the eglantine's in flower,
The hawthorn still is white, but at this hour
The heifer's loose and treading all things down,
The kid, a stray goat's butting, crown to crown.
Shepherd, return, your cattle needs your care,[5]
There's mischief brewing in the very air,
That bull will break your hedge, tread down your corn,
And ruin all your harvest ere the morn.

But in place of the shepherd of Hougoumont comes one from Caledonia, sounding his bagpipes and leading into the burning plain the Highlanders of Glencoe. And as in Flanders, when a storm is rising, the shepherd whistles, and all the cattle come

[1] If we are to accept the opening of the Field of the Battle of Waterloo literally, Quinet did not visit that spot until after this poem was published. It is difficult to understand how his pictures are so remarkably true in all their details. Was he gifted with second sight? Thus he describes his visit to "the silent farm" :—"Half way up a hill of stubble land I heard the tinkling of sheep-bells, and the clucking of fowls in a farmyard. These rustic notes came from the courts of a great isolated farm, of which I could only see the slate roofs. I went down to it, and had hardly reached it when I read on one of the brick buildings on the roadside, 'Farm of La Haye Sainte.'"—*Le Champ de Bataille de Waterloo*, p. 370.

[2] "These pigeons of the farm Papelotte, near where Ney was stationed." —P. 376.

[3] "On the causeway you hear the wheels of some unseen team groaning." —P. 377.

[4] "The forest of Soignes is about eight miles in the rear."—P. 370. "The horizon is heavy and sinister. The slightest wind that rises and plays through the foliage of the tall trees in the neighbourhood makes you fancy you hear souls murmuring and spirits passing over the face of the earth."—P. 377.

[5] "Now look on the road where that child is driving that herd of cattle belonging to La Haye Sainte."—P. 377.

from the meadows, so now many peoples are gathering together at the shrill notes of the piper.

The storm breaks. Thunder is heard, but it is neither thunder nor hail, only some squadrons crossing the plain. In the distance the wood of Hougoumont looks livid and its foliage withered.[1] Its owner will never again see his roof or his fireside. The shock of the battle is thus described:—

> Advance, advance, they're on us now in hordes;
> Drums, sound the charge, draw sabres! unsheath swords!
> Forward, brave Ney, and sap these living walls,
> Their iron squares are giving 'neath our balls;
> Nearer, get nearer yet, fight face to face,
> Our cannon for your swords will win a place;
> Nearer, get nearer yet, fight breast to breast,
> Take life for life, let slaughter know no rest.
> Flash upon flash, the bullet to its mark
> Flies swiftly on; the iron rain makes dark
> The heavy day,[2] and down in deadly showers
> Upon the foe it falls. The distance lowers
> With bomb-shells, lurid. Not a man will live
> If but the sword another hour should give
> To finish all its task. Then will these hosts
> Have passed away in throngs of pallid ghosts.

On a little hillock the Emperor sits caressing the flank of his charger, whose hair is smeared with blood. He smiles like a king of the tomb to see how fast the fruit is ripening, and how victory is inclining to him.[3] Already his troops shout as if it were gained, and he knows that if the reinforcements only arrive it will be secure. In the stormy sky he looks for his star, but the belfry on the horizon veils it.[4] Another hour and

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1 "The skeleton of Hougoumont whitens under a grove of ash trees."—P. 371.

2 "Who would believe that the empire of the world depends sometimes on such a circumstance as rain or sunshine? Nothing, however, is more true. Suppose that, instead of raining, it had been a bright day on the 18th of June 1815, the battle would have commenced with dawn; according to the view of all military men, it would have been gained by two o'clock in the afternoon. On the contrary, clouds cover the skies, they turn into rain, the soil gets broken up, the wheels stick in the mire, a morning is lost, and this means an Emperor sent to die beyond the equator and the ruin of a nation otherwise invincible."—Pp. 373, 374.

3 "From an eminence, his first position, the Emperor dictated the order of attle. He was then justified in saying, 'We have ninety chances for us, and ten against us.'"—P. 374.

4 "From his second position, a lower eminence, across the bronzed foliage of a copse, he could see the belfry of Saint-Lambert stand out in white on the hill as a phantom making some sign in the distant horizon."

his empire will be saved. With what anxiety does he scan the horizon. "Marshal, what do you see?" "A black cloud." "No, it increases." "Sire, it is the dust of your long-expected army." "No," replies the Emperor; "no, this is not Grouchy; it is a flock of vultures, messengers of destiny, horsemen more numerous than the sand, more prompt than the storm."

Now from afar, along the plain, a cry
Is heard, a voice of terror rising high:
All! all is lost! save! save himself who can.
Then panic seizes every horse and man,—
And now the hour strikes! . . . Sudden ends the strife.
Silence and death! . . . where all was hope and life!
Beneath a breath invisible, a host
Joyous, exulting, like some empty boast,
Melts in the air; all, all in terror yield,
And panic-struck have vanished from the field.

Can that be he? across the sombre night,
In the deep shadow, flying from the light,
Desperate he gallops on, his crown to save;
But all is phantom now, except the grave!

See now with brow serene the night arise;
The moon is at its full, and in the skies
Seems sweetly dreaming. The flowers of the vale
Envy its whiteness, murmuring their tale
Unto a worm, that 'neath the influence blest
Is happy as the bird in her warm nest.

Nothing now is left to France but humanity's last refuge—*Prayer* (XLVII.). The poet commits the charge of the frontiers and the strong places of France to God.

The real end having come, the remaining poems may be summed up in a few lines. *St. Helena* (XLVIII.) is a song of grief, in which the most is made of Napoleon's sufferings in exile. Poor England, who had the belling of the cat, comes in for a fearful scourging. While in *Longwood* (XLIX.) Napoleon is represented as brought to a sense of the meaning of his life; still he remains the intense egotist, comforting himself with the thought of the power he has wielded and the great things he has done.

Slowly a coffin passes over the hill. The dead giant is carried to his grave. No name is engraved on the *Tomb* (L.). In place of mourners and funeral, trumpets invisible are heard; and at their sound ghostly horses neigh, drums beat, and cannons roar. Over his tomb his only true widows (LI.), his battlefields, weep.

In the final poem the poet raises a *Column* (LII.) to his hero's

glory. Although Quinet's genius compelled him to portray the whole career of Napoleon with a judgment almost apocalyptic in its fidelity, it took much bitter experience before Quinet as a patriot wholly believed as Quinet the seer. How unerring must have been his prophetic insight when a subject intended to arouse the flagging patriotism of France, and written amidst the galling insolences of her expected foe, proved such a powerful exposure of the evil results of that mania for military glory, ever the temptation of France.

CHAPTER IV.

HEIDELBERG, PARIS. 1837–1838.

"Verus Prometheus."—*Tertullian.*
"Ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός."—*S. John.*

WRITING to his mother in July 1837, Edgar Quinet tells her that he is engaged upon a new work of imagination. His aim is to touch the foundation of human life, to be at once correct and audacious, classic in form, and fresh in ideas and sentiments, above all clear; to enclose a whole world in a luminous circle. He has a fine subject, and one, moreover, truly religious. He has bid adieu to the literature of despair.

"Up to the present," he continues, "I have been always struggling, struggling with everything—with language, with art, with tradition, with myself. Now for the first time I live upon harmony instead of contention, and am happy in my thoughts. Possibly this new condition arises in great degree from my subject, but I think that I have myself something to do with the change, and that it will survive. As Ahasuerus tended to drive to despair, so its successor should bring back peace. Not but what there are still in it strange and divine sufferings, but they lead in the end to immutable repose, —a vast difference. I pass from heroism and from the struggle with the impossible to the sentiment of Providence, from the demon to the archangel, from Ahasuerus to . . . (permit me to keep the name a secret, except to say it is a truly grand one, and makes the meaning clear at once)."

In another letter he says: "At all events I have expressed some of the dearest thoughts of my heart, and this already is enough. If the poem speaks to your soul, awakening there some profound echo, then I am sure that after I am gone something will remain of 'Prometheus.' *It is my profession of faith, the sign of my hope in the future life.*"

Thus wrote Edgar Quinet to his mother, to whom he expected his new poem would prove specially interesting. He had, in fact, dedicated it to her.

The story of Prometheus is one of the most ancient of the Greek myths. Quinet gives it the highest possible antiquity, since he believes the Greeks borrowed it from the East. Both in the ancient and modern world great poets have found in it materials for their art. Æschylus, Sophocles, Goethe, Byron, Shelley, have in various forms made Prometheus the subject of poetry. Quinet has seen the myth from a point of view different to them all. He considers that it can only be understood in the light of Christianity; that as long as the prophecy of Prometheus remained unfulfilled and he himself a captive, the story wanted completeness, and was therefore an enigma to the ancients.

Prometheus had revolted against the gods, had made men, and had stolen the sacred fire. Zeus had bound him with everlasting chains to Caucasus, and sent an eagle to feed upon his liver. Prometheus had prophesied the fall of the gods, refusing to submit, although Hermes tried his best to persuade him. How was Prometheus to be delivered from this horrible position, and the honour of the gods preserved? The Greek poets got out of the difficulty by a compromise and a legal fiction. Prometheus was in some sort repentant, and Hercules was permitted to deliver him, the letter of the Olympian decree being maintained by bits of rock remaining attached to his hands and feet. This method of getting out of the difficulty proves,

Quinet thinks, how utterly insoluble the myth was to paganism.

By regarding Prometheus as the type of Religious Humanity, and so giving the myth a world-wide character, Quinet is not only able to justify the prophecy of the aspiring Titan, but to show him delivered.

The unity of civilisation has become, he says, one of the dogmas of the world. One sole God gathering together into the same family the brother peoples separated from each other in time. This view of the world's history suggests its likeness to a great drama, of which all the threads in the hands of its author are working to a predetermined end. If we can realise this to be an undoubted fact, we must have passed the point in the drama in which its action all centres.

No one, it may safely be affirmed, ever took a wider survey than Quinet of universal history, or ever more completely kept himself in relation with all its parts. A cosmogonic genius in his inmost nature, he sympathised in a peculiar manner with prehistoric man, yet at the same time he took the deepest, most active interest in all that concerned his own generation. No one can read his "Génie des Religions" and deny that he not only understood but entered profoundly and lovingly into the spirit and struggles of Religious Humanity in every age and every clime. With a vast historical knowledge, the widest human sympathies, joined to that poetic nature which enables a man to see the simplest truths of the universe, who better able than Quinet to realise this great historical drama in all its poetic harmony? who better able than he to show the point in which the action all centres, and which will give the key to its solution? That point Quinet has, no doubt, is the Advent of Christ. Is there, then, an enigma in the universe, a point in the universal drama which is obscure? Bring it into relation with this great fact, and see what light it throws upon it. Quinet has

done this with the story of Prometheus; and he declares it enables him to justify the Titan, and bring the myth to a natural and therefore glorious termination.

It may be objected, as a matter of fact, that Christ has come, and Prometheus or Religious Humanity is not delivered. To this it is sufficient to reply, The drama is not over. As long as man remains what he is, he will be ever aspiring heavenwards, ever making daring efforts after his birthright, taking heaven by storm, and using the spoil in spite of all sacred forms, institutions, or dogmas. A Caucasus must follow, a devouring eagle must feed on the soul that thus acts. It is his fate to act thus, his fate to suffer.

But a world-wide problem has another point of view besides. There is the view outside here, such as presents itself to the Eternal, to whom past, present, and future are alike visible. Incomprehensible as this divine view is to us, we may gather some idea of it by conceiving how a dramatic author must regard his work. Before it is even written, the *dénouement* is present to him, and is as if it had taken place. Thus if he intends to deliver his hero out of a series of apparently inextricable difficulties, to him his hero is already delivered. So a poet, taking the dramatic view of the history of the world that Quinet does in "Prometheus," must look at it from its divine author's point of sight, or be involved in inextricable confusion, offering possibly a splendid poem, but only adding to the general bewilderment.

The means, also, by which the poet sets forth this eternal view, must be the divine one—symbolism. Nature and human life are admitted on all sides to be full of this symbolism of spiritual truth; why should a work so divine as the history of our race be less the subject of it?

If, then, Quinet takes the historic fact of the Advent of the Christ as the solution of this old pagan myth, he uses it symbolically and means it to be understood in its

eternal sense; that sense which, beneath all its theology, the spirit of Christianity has declared with consentaneous voice to be the meaning of the history of the Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ—namely, that the Eternal therein pledges Himself to deliver man, that here in time He is delivering man, while in the light of Eternity He has already delivered him.

"Prometheus" was, moreover, as the opening of this chapter intimates, another "grand confession of the author's life."

"In the Story of this Titan," he says, "I have found a place for all the principal sufferings, anguish, hopes, and chimeras of my own life. My idea is that this struggle is the one that goes on in each of us, for every man has his Caucasus. Still more, the subject covers all the religious thoughts of the age; its doubts, its revolts, its struggle with the invisible God."

For Quinet wished his readers not only to regard "Prometheus" as a type of Religious Humanity historically considered, but as including that interior drama of God and man, of faith and death, of the Creator and the creature, which goes on in every individual when once the spiritual life is awakened. It is in vain, he thinks, to seek to avoid the thoughts it contains; under one form or another, they are incessantly returning, being, so to speak, the element that eternally underlies all poetry. Whatever may be the occupations of an age, the ardour of present interests, the conflict of doctrines, the collision and fury of parties, there comes an hour at last when it is necessary to meet God face to face. In that moment the old questions, of which we thought ourselves for ever rid, resound anew. Who art thou? what believest thou? what awaits thee? In vain we turn away the ear; these questions retain their hold on us even when we have made our reply.

"How much more striking this is when we belong to one of those epochs in which Religion submits to an incontestable

change. It is then that the great enigmas, proposed by preceding societies and never resolved, awake again. In the ignorance into which we feel that we have again been plunged, such an emblem of the curiosity of the human soul as this ancient myth of Prometheus appears as if made expressly for our own time. The fundamental differences that separate the ages having disappeared with positive faith, all the generations of humanity find themselves drawn together in one community of doubt and moral anguish. There are no longer either Greeks or Barbarians, Gentiles or Christians, ancients or moderns, but one same human society gathered round the same abyss, asking each other the same questions in nearly the same terms."

Thus Quinet's "Prometheus" has the double meaning of all great human emblems; it is at once universal and individual, applying alike to the ever-continuing struggle of Humanity, and the comparatively momentary one of the solitary soul; having an especial interest for an age in which that struggle turns on elementary and universal truth.

The form in which the poem is thrown is epic. It suits the grandeur of the subject; and, moreover, Quinet was ambitious with that noble ambition which forced him always to the most difficult tasks, to remove the reproach that "Frenchmen were wanting in the epic mind."

The action of the poem is divided into three parts: Prometheus, Inventor of Fire; Prometheus chained; Prometheus delivered.

PROMETHEUS.

Prometheus the Inventor of Fire.

I.

The earth appears just emerging from a deluge. Prometheus is on the shores of the ocean; he has taken up a piece of clay, and has formed human beings of all ages from it. On the shore, in his cavern, and in the neighbouring forest, numberless figures appear, as yet motionless. His final work is a female of gigantic proportions. When he has completed her, he

breathes into her his own soul; she lives; and then ensues a beautiful dialogue between Hesione and her maker, in which she asks who she is, where she is, and what fate awaits her. She rejoices in life, and is content to suffer with Prometheus.

II.

Prometheus is here seen advancing over the cold cinders at the foot of a volcano. From its crater two tongues of red flame ascend, resembling the forked tongues of two enormous fiery serpents. As he approaches, the clang of the hammers of the Cyclops is heard below. Night falls, and the chorus of the Cyclops ceases, the noise of their hammers dies out. Then Prometheus, leaning over the side of the crater, looks into the abyss. Taking up some of the fire, he puts it into a vase, and redescends the mountain, calling all the various forms of nature around to witness that their soul now belongs to him, that he has it in his possession, living, palpitating, that it will propagate itself, and go on increasing, able to set world after world ablaze.

III.

Hesione meets him. Prometheus gives her the urn, and explains the properties of the wonderful element it contains. From it she lights a heap of dead leaves from the wood. A feast is made, and to celebrate this the primal fire of the world, an ancient oak, is sacrificed. Then Prometheus calls his clay men to warm themselves; they come forth from the caverns, from the valleys, from the woods, as yet knowing hardly how to speak. Yet they come murmuring a chorus, the burden of which is, a wondering and a questioning from whence are all the things they see. Following the men, come the women uttering another chorus, more beautiful, expressive of the maternal instinct. Prometheus then evokes choirs of kings and prophets, who each utter characteristic notes. The kings complain of an arid way in which there is no guide, of the weight of the sceptre, of the happiness of those whose lives flow noiselessly on as the river among the reeds. The chorus of the prophets is grand but vague; bursting out like a flame, it seems to promise much, then suddenly it sinks and dies out. Finally all the men join in a chorus of sad foreboding. Hesione approaches, and offers them the cup. Prometheus welcomes his guests, bidding them partake of the bread of life, and mark the gifts he has bestowed on them, chief of all—"Fire, parent of arts, strong son of liberty;" "Brothers

of Hesione," he concludes, "what would ye more?" The new-born of earth reply, as the supreme want of those who have just received a soul: "Give us, oh, give us gods!"

IV.

The Cyclops waking, find fire has been stolen; they sing the vast results. Above all they say—

"This arrow shot, all things have lost their shield;
To thought at last th' immortal gods must yield
An open gate.
Like music 'midst the reeds, heaven's breath awakes,
Then mightier grown than any Cyclops, breaks
E'en changeless fate.

"The world, confided to these men of clay,
From its old bondage quickly breaks away,
And soon it flies
In a new orbit. Thunders, lightnings, hail,
Gather your storms, earth's vessel now sets sail
For other skies!"

PROMETHEUS CHAINED.

I.

Prometheus is seen dragged by the Cyclops to the top of Caucasus, and there by order of Nemesis he is fastened to the rock by a double chain forged in the fires of Lemnos, and so strong that eternity cannot wear it out, or all the gods together break it. His hands are nailed to the crest of the rock, while the tempest howls round his feet. Yet this is not enough, for Nemesis would have his spirit bound. But the Cyclops declare this impossible. The soul would set itself free, its proud thought would break adamantine chains. But with thought free, nothing is accomplished, the gods will be in terror. Urged to try at least to destroy one memory, one of the Cyclops replies, "From its poles far easier could I move the world." This Cyclops looks back with regret to the indulgent reign of Saturn, and deprecates the new Olympus, even going so far as to deny the free-will of Jupiter; whereupon he is loaded with curses by Nemesis and sinks into the earth. Nemesis quits Prometheus mocking him.

II.

Alone, bound to the rock, Prometheus is far from despairing. He consoles himself with reflections such as must have been present to the martyrs of thought in all ages.

O worlds! O winged winds, bringing from far the storm!
Sources of briny floods! hills cloud-capped wanting form!
And thou, O sun, beholding all things 'neath the skies,
See on earth's altar bound, a god in anguish lies!
Is not the victim with the temple rightly paired?
The universe, the shrine; the victim he who dared
To stand alone against the gods. The cruel priest,
The tyrant Jupiter, whose tortures ne'er have ceased
Since on this peak they chained me, binding hands and feet.
But strong in my own will, with joy the thought I greet—
I suffer thus to staunch the tears of human kind.
Let grief then pierce my soul, my heart let tortures bind,
Let all those evils come which from afar I see,
Pour down upon my head, and endless, rage round me,
I am content to make that which I would arise,
The works will speak aloud, though still their maker lies.
Dull gods! in this same thought I can contemn all pain,
For from these bleeding hands, which now your fetters chain,
Has sprung a living world,—that hating you, loves me:
Peoples and tribes, kings to whom earth will bow the knee,
Thoughts that aspire with boundless hope, that nought can chain;—
Is this too dear to pay for still increasing pain?
Make your chains tighter yet, your nails drive deeper still,
Insatiate at my heart your vulture take his fill,—
I fear ye not, Olympians, nor ask your grace,
Prometheus shall arise, you sink to your own place.
Envy, O vulture, my distress!
Thy every wound my soul shall bless.
Eternal cross! eternal life!
Eternal joy shall end this strife!

III.

Ocean visits the Titan, seeking in pity to induce him to submit. He tells him that his very name is already forgotten on earth, and that the men he created are worshipping his enemies. Prometheus confesses that it is hard to hear this, but is immovable in his determination not to yield. "Are there any signs of the gods growing old?" Ocean replies, "Happy is he who rests upon them, for as they were yesterday so are they to-day. The gods possess all." "Save the unknown," says Prometheus. Ocean combats this as a chimera, asserting that the present alone is real, the future nothing; the gods are all powerful, yet they listen to the cry of the smallest bird; Prometheus ought to pray. Then, in a beautiful passage, Prometheus relates how he once did pray, but that Olympus had repelled his too credulous spirit. He is tired of praying to dull phantoms; sometimes he doubts, even in spite of the vulture which feeds upon him, whether he does not dream, whether Jupiter himself is more than a name, a false veil extended before eternity. Ocean re-

bukes him for theorising, and asks him why he alone struggles with the gods when all else submits. Prometheus tries to make Ocean understand the difference between their natures, how impossible it is for thought to submit to any bonds. Ocean departs convinced that his misery has driven him mad.

IV.

Another trial now awaits the tortured Titan. Hesione appears in the valley below. In attempting to scale the rocks to reach Prometheus, she sinks exhausted in a ravine. She feels about to die, and calls upon her maker to save her from the tomb; she entreats him to find her a remedy against death. When he tells her that he cannot, she asks him at least to teach her its secrets, that she may not go there in the dark; but here again Prometheus is obliged to confess his ignorance. It is all a mystery to him, and he can only bid her hope. Then Hesione dies.

V.

A choir of Sybils surround Prometheus, seeking from him the knowledge of the future. He first of all calls upon them to tell him what the nations are doing, what gods they adore, whether the world still deceives the hopes of the sages, what is the state of men's hearts, what, in fact, are the omens of the future. The choir reply:—

> Omens that float across the breeze,
> Or rustle through Dodona's trees,
> Or wake on Memnon's sandy plain,
> 'Twere easy for us to explain;
> But to unfold the woes that agonise the heart,
> Display its wounds incurable, describe its smart,
> Chimeras, visions, tortures never-ending,
> Who can reveal whereto such plagues are tending?
> All have their Caucasus, consumed by love or hate
> As thou: a vulture at his heart is each man's fate,
> Nor will he cease to smile, e'en when its talons tear.
>
> Long time the human heart has lost the power of prayer,
> Fragrant with heavenly dew, at morning light
> No more its praiseful hymn ascends. The dead with fright
> Shrink back from Paradise itself. Know'st thou the face
> Of Doubt, haggard and pale, running its weary race
> By chance; a serpent binds its heart and ceaseless stings,
> While on a throw of dice the fate of worlds it flings.
> Know'st thou th' illusive void, making all knowledge vain,
> The Nothing, on a word basing its empty reign,
> The cold but eager eye that follows on Despair!
> These auguries affright thee, worse are in the air,—

I see on thrones of gold the careworn monarchs weep,
I hear the people sadly sighing in their sleep.
Far from the fertile fields where ripen living corn,
Souls seek their nourishment in desert wilds forlorn.
The mind, man's newest idol, tott'ring to its fall,
Comes crashing in; its ruins cover like a pall
The worshippers, blaspheming! None know what they seek;
The very skies are like a tomb, and seem to reek
With clouds of doubt. All is at once affirmed, denied;
In place of God, men seem to have the Fiend for guide.
Greedy, yet wasteful, the age with loftiest brow
Doubts its own creeds, will not at its own altars bow;
What presages are these? Say, has the world grown old
Thou prophet-god, to us the oracles unfold.

Prometheus announces at last the approaching fall of the gods. The Sybils cannot understand the possibility, but Prometheus assures them that at that very time, in the desert, the new God has revealed himself in a flaming bush—the God of an innumerable tribe of shepherds. Then in a further vision he beholds another Caucasus, an inconceivable sacrifice. To the sorrows which he foresees, what are his sorrows! Who on that holy hill, with face divine, is that other Prometheus? What his crime? Is he a Titan slave or a crucified God? Oh, wonder! he blesses the world which oppresses him. The choir ask where is this other Caucasus, that they may turn their steps thitherward. Prometheus, without answering their questions, prophesies that this God of gods will be his Deliverer.

VI.

This prophecy having reached Olympus, the gods send one of their number to question Prometheus, but he will say nothing save that the child of the future will be the inheritor of the skies. Not even promises of deliverance can extract more; so, with threats of terrible sufferings, the god leaves him. The choir of Sybils console Prometheus; but the threats are quickly verified, for the twelve Olympians, descending like eagles, precipitate themselves upon their prey.

VII.

Prometheus now enters the last stage of his trial. It is no longer the vulture that causes him agony: it is his own heart. He is no longer able to believe even in his own prophecy.

Black doubt is come, sole torment that I dread,—
Doubt, like the plague-struck with his hands of lead,
Cares not for cure, but easy takes death's snare,—
Black doubt is come, the ill I cannot bear!"

VIII.

A chorus of Sybils concludes this part of the poem. Song after song rises from the inspired ones in various metres, until finally a prayer to the new God bursts from Prometheus.

> O long-expected God, the oracles are Thine;
> Come as the swallow comes, in the sweet harvest time;[1]
> The corn is ripe.
> The world prepares Thy cradle, why delay Thy birth?
> Thy infant cries alone will fill the silent earth,
> Of heaven the type.
>
> A cry goes up for Thee, man tears his aching heart,
> He thirsts for God, he strains in every part
> To catch Thy view.
> Wilt Thou the uprooted tree shall bloom once more
> And yield the blessed fruit it erst-while bore?
> Then faith renew.

PROMETHEUS DELIVERED.

I.

The archangels Michel and Raphael descend at sunrise from heaven. Michel glows with ardour at the beauty of creation, and its glories declare to him Jehovah's praise. To Raphael the sighs of human hearts seem to overpower the morning hymns of the universe; he feels the tremor that is passing over the great cities, and the start the dead are making in their graves. For the Lord has come, and new life is springing everywhere. Michel expatiates on the glory of the Father, Raphael on that of the Son.

Resting on Mount Caucasus they experienced a sensation of horror.

II.

Prometheus is discovered by the archangels bound to the Rock. They imagine him a fallen archangel, and are full of compassion for his unhappy fate. The Titan is so wrapt in admiration of the pure beauty of his celestial visitors that he forgets his own misery, and hardly recognises their repeated inquiries as to who he is, and how he came there. At last he relates to them his history in a passage of surpassing beauty. "Ask me not where I was born, for perchance ye know better than I; all I know is—

[1] The scene of the poem is in a latitude the same as that of the south of France and Spain.

That long I cried, 'My Father,' while the prayerful earth
Re-echoed with the cry, but never from my birth
In the clear daylight have I seen that gracious form,
Though oft 'twas said it stood from eve to early dawn
Touching my brow with heavenly poppies.
. . . . . .
I felt His presence all around, but touched Him not;
His love to me was sweet, mine was a happy lot;
I thought He thought on me. I listened everywhere
For His sweet voice, to Him I raised my heart in prayer.
So blessed I Him, that of His sword I kissed the gleam,
How happy was I then. . . . But was it not a dream?"

For as age advanced this state of innocence and of faith departed. He lost the memory of his heavenly Father, and wandering on a high place, met the gods. Majestic in form, their beds perfumed, breathing incense and living on phantoms, he was so fascinated with them that he gladly consented to share their purple and ride in their car. Soon he began to think of carving an idol himself, and of being admitted into the divine ranks. But when he commenced to make an altar he found the stone so icy cold that he shrank from it. As he sat with gods and, laughing, lifted the cup of nectar to his lips, it flashed upon him that it would leave his heart drunk with its bitterness and its dregs.

Quitting the gods, he sought the earth and found it a desert; man did not yet exist. The lions ranged it, but mute, with heavy steps, and sleep still in their eyes. The spiders alone seemed busy. Often he heard voices from the depths of the wood, saw lovely forms in the clouds, but they proved nothing; and long days passed in this arid silence. Yet was there in his soul a hope, a desire, a presage of an unknown but glorious future. Sometimes, as he crept to the entrance of his cave, he would hear the bee murmuring in the woods, and would say, "Lo, here it comes, the long-dreamt-of joy;" but again it was nothing, and in his agony he smote his breast, and in despair could have torn out his dull heart.

Thus his days passed, despondency increasing as the years rolled on, when one evening he watched the sea sleeping in the light of a wan star, and envied the calm repose of the reeds upon the shore. Suddenly a thought entered his mind (whence came that flash sublime?); the inward tempest ceased and morning broke. He took up some of the wet clay and made from it the figure of a demi-god.

"Man formed, he needed soul; I poured within him mine.
I stole for him the sacred fire, that source divine
Of living things. He drank my cup, his sorrows went,
I made his future seem with golden promise blent;

Within my cave he sat, looking, but seeing nought,
Listened, but heard no sound, he moved, but nothing sought;
I loosed his tongue, music I woke within his soul,
And taught him how in cadence all its notes should roll;
For him from starry spheres the secret lore I caught,
While in the forest depths the augury I sought;
Earth's hidden wealth I taught him to obtain;
Laws, marriages and funerals, the feast, the game,
The scudding sail I made, cattle I yoked to carts,
Gave him all customs, and created for him arts.
Thus step by step man onward went making advance,
And hand in hand the nations moved in solemn dance.
But I had little done, since man was but a shade,
In spite of all my care, but one short hour he stayed;
Too late within his soul I poured celestial truth,
Too late he learnt the laws that make eternal youth;
Yet spoke his open brow of life beyond the grave,
Of soul immortal, that eternally might lave
In bliss supernal, and with ardour long to know
The secrets of the universe, above, below.
Searching within himself, man found, with much surprise,
Another universe in his own being lies.
Plunging into the dark abyss, his light went out;
He wandered through its caves, lost in a maze of doubt.
One darksome night within a grave he chanced to fall,
An empty skull declared how nothing endeth all.
Breathing upon the ash, its soul I bid man mark,
How in a fire that seems extinct, still lives a spark.
Then from Sybilline books eternal questions rose,
As nation after nation lives the trouble grows.
Death's dark enigmas, with those darker still of life,
And that of liberty, the cause of all the strife.
Who now can say the gods these lower skies sustain?
'Tis I, Prometheus, guide of men, the gods are vain!
Too much I love, to love too much is still my fate,
Behold then why the vulture is insatiate;
And why, perhaps, upon this peak, twice deified,
By Jupiter's decree I have been crucified."

Jupiter has fallen, say the archangels; the Eternal has reconquered the skies. Prometheus for a time refuses to credit the good news. Suffering, and hope long deferred, render him suspicious. Raphael asks him if he is of those spirits who live on illusions, who prefer their own dreams to all the gifts of heaven, who, enamoured with the impossible, are displeased with everything. Prometheus knows the evil, fears it is too late, he has expected too much.

Then the archangels, in the name of their Father, deliver him with a word. His chains drop; Prometheus rises by degrees and remains motionless. Michel draws his bow and slays the vulture.

Now Prometheus enters into a peace which he can hardly explain. The angels, to strengthen his faith, bid him listen to a distant muttering. It is the cry of the false gods, who are coming to entreat him to carry their prayer to the Eternal.

III.

The suppliant gods appear. Prometheus refuses their prayer. They ask that at least they may be permitted to exist as slave-gods, with just room enough to crawl. Michel tells them that since Jehovah fills the universe, so that there is no abyss where He is not, there can be no place for them, and they must re-enter the nothing. They depart cursing the archangels, and prophesying that a like fate will come to them.

STANZAS FROM CHORUS OF DEPARTING GODS.

Earth's ancient masters pass away,
Their winged coursers all are fled,
Their names are numbered with the dead,
And heaven's doors are closed for aye!

Happy the broom and mountain heath,
Arrayed in purple and in gold,
From age to age they ne'er grow old,
They wear each year their pristine wreath.

But to destroy divinest thrones,
To ever veil a godlike brow,
A human thought availeth now,
The sighs of men, their sobs or groans.

As day to day, dark night to dawn,
Spring to winter, joy to sorrow,
So each heaven has its morrow,
When priests and worshippers are gone.

In temples thick with autumn leaves,
In empty hearts where love is dry,
In minds that doubt without a sigh,
Its restless ghost for ages grieves.

O'er altars left alone,
O'er fallen stock and stone,
The tides will flow and ebb,
Or spider weave its web.

The morning star has set,
Life fades without regret,
Everywhere was light—
Everywhere is night.

From shoreless seas,
From stricken trees,
From dull, dark minds,
Borne on the winds,
Come useless cries
And mournful sighs,
The gods have fled,—
The gods are dead!

IV.

Prometheus is left alone with the archangels; the despairing notes of the dying gods still ring in his ear; he cannot get rid of the thought that the same fate will one day befall his new companions. They bid him cast aside doubt. He tells them sorrow everywhere gives birth to doubt, and asks them if they are not afraid to take him to their heaven, lest there by chance a drop should fall from his cup, stain their robes, and, the spot always increasing, infernal doubt should fill heaven itself with grief. Raphael replies that they tread all fear under foot as they would a serpent, and bidding Prometheus spread his wings, they fly from heaven to heaven. Prometheus asks whither they carry him, and the archangels reply to the bosom of Jehovah.

V.

The deliverance of Prometheus is finally celebrated by a celestial concert, which opens with a chorus of seraphim.

The holocaust of time is o'er,
And we the lustral waters bring,
Now from the desert, fountains spring,
Let canticles of praises soar!

For now through grace has gained release
Another arid, broken heart,
The prey of doubt's devouring smart.
But now rejoicing in God's peace.

Thus the poor, captive soul, and blind,
Shall rise at last to skies unknown,
Since to the righteous light is sown,
Such must the Eternal Father find.

A seraphim asks when the groaning nations, bound to their fiery Caucasus, shall be delivered. To which the chorus replies, that every vulture of injustice must end by devouring itself; but they also promise that the Supreme Archer shall deliver the future from the talons of the past.

Hesione appears; she has come forth from a tomb. She

utters some beautiful thoughts on the advantage of death, likening it to an invisible sculptor who has struck off from her soul the memory of sorrow.

The chorus celebrate the resurrection. Such is the power of life that even if a God were to bury himself He would be reborn. Life may seem lost in the sand, to have perished with death, but strike it with the rod of fire and God will burst forth as at first. Yet to draw men out of a snare in a sacrilegious age, God often hides Himself, and then, sudden as a lion, darts forth upon a terrified universe. So, too, as an Eagle He remounts at times to the higher heavens, the abode of spirits; then the young of the viper think He is dead, but in a moment, emerging from the thundercloud, He strangles the brood in their nest.

So the chorus, in a final hymn, invoke the Eternal, beseeching Him, as Eagle, Dove, or Lion, to come out of the clouds that hide Him; not to allow Himself any longer to be misconceived under vain images, nor to prolong the night, nor the heavy chains which weigh on human hearts, but to come speedily and permit His forehead to be crowned with joy.

CHAPTER V.

PARIS, HEIDELBERG. 1836–1838.

"Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight
Like this last, dim, weird battle of the west."
—*Passing of Arthur.*

EDGAR QUINET was not twenty-one when he attempted a History of the Human Conscience and of Moral Personality. His object was to trace the gradual development of the Individual through Time. This work was never published, but his ideas on the subject come out in various works, especially in his writings about Herder. While admitting Herder's view of the perfection of the Universe as a system of progressive forces, able to rise from the rudest to the highest manifestations, he conceived that the motive power which impelled it was the struggle of the Infinite to escape its bounds. This Infinite found itself most fully in man, the highest form in nature. It drove him restlessly on, making him that eternal traveller through the ages, unable to make his final home in any empire, city, or civilisation. Nothing can satisfy the Infinite within him, since it is from the visible universe itself that that Infinite seeks to escape.

Man realised this Infinite for the first time in the Revelation of the Universe by the first ray of light. As the Universe disclosed itself, man found something in himself which corresponded to the Universe, but was not the Universe. He began thus to realise his distinctness from the Universe, but it was not until the

Infinite had become overpowering in some individual man that the first distinct break from nature was made, and man set out on a separate career. The first effort made, the race follow, and from the new order thus created another Individual Will showed the way to the next platform, and so on through the ages.

To Quinet the human race was a collection of individuals; he refused to believe in the idea of an Universal Being called man, as real a person as the Individual. The Individual was his unit, and it was his opinion that "all life, all greatness, as well as all misery, emanates from the Individual." Not that he pushed his doctrine of the will so far as to put it in opposition to a perfect organisation of the universe, for he conceived that it might even be possible to arrive at a science of human wills showing that they too followed certain laws. But this being admitted, nothing was more contrary to his idea of all history and of all progress than to despoil the individual in order to enrich the species. In the attacks, therefore, made by the popular criticism of his day on the great Individualities of History, he felt that the very principle of all personality was involved.

It was this belief that seems to have moved him to write a series of papers in 1836, on the Epic poets, for the "Revue des Deux Mondes," in which he refutes the Homeric theories of Wolf and those on early Roman history advanced by Niebuhr, and which no doubt had much to do with the adverse criticism he subsequently published of Strauss's "Life of Jesus." His work on the Epic poets is of course not confined to the theories of Wolf and Niebuhr; but as it is these portions of his work that best illustrate his views, and, at this particular period to which we have arrived, appear to be the next links in the chain, I shall dwell on them chiefly in the following sketch of his articles on the Epic poets.

THE GREEK EPOS—HAS HOMER EVER LIVED?

"The question of the existence of Homer," he commences by remarking, "is not a mere amusement for the curious; on the contrary, it contains the whole origin of poetry. No system of literary criticism can dispense with a solution of this enigma. For, according as that solution is determined in one sense or another, the very foundations of Art are changed; whatever is admitted as regards Homer, can be applied to other names and to other times; and can become by extension the rule of the Epic; so that this question is one rather of a general law than of a particular accident." He then proceeds to trace the rise of the question, and to place before his readers Wolf's hypothesis, and the arguments by which he supports it. Finally, he says, having run through all its phases, the new hypothesis was obliged to pull up, its difficulties being found insurmountable.

The question then returns, How have the Homeric poems been composed? It is clear that before reaching us they have passed through a number of vicissitudes. Then having referred to the various agencies through which the poems have been transmitted, he says:—

Now, if we imagine the alterations of all kinds to which these poems must have been submitted in passing through so many hands, instead of being astonished at their want of harmony in some parts, we shall rather wonder that such incoherences are not more numerous.

If the Iliad and the Odyssey are really only a collection of the works of several poets made by Pisistratus, then we must say Pisistratus was himself the greatest and most incomprehensible of all these poets. For to unite a number of fragments of this sort in such a manner as to produce an illusion of beauty, so perfect as to mislead the judgment of Antiquity, required more genius than has ever been attributed to Homer himself. Moreover, if the works of Homer are such a collection, how is it that we have only the two episodes of the Iliad and the Odyssey, when in the times of the Alexandrians it appears that there was a series of poems embracing all the traditions of the Trojan war? How was it that Antiquity had only eyes and ears for those attributed to Homer; why did Pisistratus, if he wished to make one complete whole of the traditions of the war, abandon them all for the two poems of the Iliad and the Odyssey? What makes it more strange is that these two poems are foreign to the local traditions of Athens. What can explain such a selection except his agreement with the general opinion of antiquity, that these poets of the Homeric cycle all languish at the feet of Homer?

The difficulty from which the doubt mainly proceeds is, that these poems of Homer are too long to have been produced without writing. But it is forgotten that song being an element inseparable from poetry in Antiquity, it answered as a means of preservation to writing in the Middle Age, and printing in this. We are too apt to imagine these old poets according to the fashion of our own day, gloomily hiding their secret until it was finished. Far from this, they were never separated from the people; scarcely had they uttered a rhapsody before it was caught up by a thousand voices and published to the world. Thus the Homeric poems were indeed composed in fragments, each fragment becoming in itself a public tradition to which the poet himself recurred when he wished to refresh his memory. In this sense Vico's idea that the Iliad and the Odyssey were the work of the Greek people may be admitted. The poet invented, the people recollected. One was the voice, the other the echo. The entire people of Greece,—this was the book always open, in which the poet wrote day by day his imperishable work.

In this manner the Koran was published; and in modern times there have been poets, Beranger for instance, whose poems could have been thus preserved without the aid of writing or printing.

It is not doubted by any one now that Wolf put the origin of writing in Greece at too recent a date; but apart from that, there was in the institution of the rhapsodists a guarantee for the preservation of the works of the poet. They learned the Homeric poems just as a profession is learned in the present day. The memory of the lines was a family heritage. The rivalry of the singers helped to preserve the text; for each made it his pride not only to declaim better than his competitors, but to possess the finest, most complete, most correct version.

But how, it is asked, could the rhapsodists find audiences capable of listening to such long poems? It is not necessary to suppose that they ever sung an epic through in one day. Poetry with the ancients was a necessary condition of life; their interest in it was inexhaustible. I have seen in the Morea a Klephte who continued to recite during a whole spring, at the same place, the popular songs of modern Greece, his audience never failing him; and again, on the Mole at Naples, improvisatores, who carry on their profession the whole year round, never finishing their story in one day, but sometimes keeping it up for a week, the crowd assembling in advance, undeterred by wind or sun. If, then, we only suppose in the ancient Greeks the same poetic curiosity that we find now in Southern Europe amongst the ragged lazzaroni, the rhapsodist might easily have

recited a thousand lines in a day, and hardly more than a month would have been necessary for him to get through the whole of the poems of Homer.

These poems are clearly born of the popular inspiration, but they wear the crown and bear the seal of a studied art. And not only does Homer belong to cultured poetry, but everything demonstrates that a long tradition of art existed before him. His predecessors will remain for ever unknown. Doubtless there were great poets among them, but Homer's grandeur consists in his having absorbed into his work their passed glories, just as Ferdousi, the Persian poet, has gathered up in himself all the traditions that preceded him.

Thus the Iliad and the Odyssey do not come at the beginning of the life of the Greek people; they are rather the testament of a past epoch, a monument that closes a forgotten antiquity. Their most striking characteristic is that they for ever seal and consecrate the unity of the Greek people. No scattered songs, without arrangement or plan, could have produced this miracle. Had the poems emanated solely from the people, they would have reflected the tumultuous genius of the Greek states; we should have had rhapsodies Dorian and Ionian, the aristocracy struggling with the democracy, a poetry of contrasts, but not the poetry of Homer. After Orpheus, Homer was the Moses of the Greek world, leading them out of Chaos into Unity.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF ROME—REFUTATION OF NIEBUHR'S SYSTEM.

Sixteen years after the hypotheses of Wolf had appeared they were applied still more brilliantly to Roman history by Niebuhr, a man who to ardour of proselytism added such gravity, such heroism of intelligence, that it is very difficult for his adversaries to pronounce his name without veneration—in intellect, soul, and imagination, a true Northern. He belonged to that period when Germany struggled, the sword in one hand, the trowel in the other. He was in everything a noble, a courageous, an implacable enemy.

He published the first part of his Roman History in 1811. It is important to remember this, because it was just the epoch when the Songs of the Nations had suddenly obtained unexpected importance. The air was full of these national melodies —Spanish romances, Scotch and Irish ballads, Tyrolese, Russian, Servian songs. Above all, it was the reign of the Nibelungenlied. Under the influence of this state of literary opinion, Niebuhr conceived his theory of the early history of Rome.

This at least explains how he came to transport the harp of Siegfried into the Pomerium of the Latins, and how it was that he came to attribute the ideal genius of the Scandinavians and the poetic instinct of the Burgundians to the common people of Rome.

Quinet then proceeds to relate the process by which Niebuhr destroyed the credit of early Roman annals, and how he resolved what had been supposed to be veritable history into the lays of Romulus, of Tarpeia, of Numa, of Ancus, of Servius, of Lucretia, and of Tarquin, poems completed many centuries after the events had happened, being sometimes of popular, sometimes of aristocratic origin.

"'In considering," Quinet then goes on to say, "this hypothesis of a plebeian epic, the first question that occurs is, By what organs it had been expressed, and by what means has it been transmitted and perpetuated? If in Rome the national memorials had been transmitted by means of song, there would have been a class analogous to the Greek rhapsodists, families devoted to the work as a profession; but we find no trace of such a class, and nothing at all like what we find amongst the moderns,—bards, minstrels, *meistersänger*. Far from this, the very name of *poet* is wanting in this language of patron and client; they know at first only the prophet and the diviner, *vates*. But, supposing the poet to have existed by some other name, we should at least expect to find that the profession that had preserved the annals of the city would be treated with honour. But we find that when the poet is first spoken of he is regarded with contempt as a mere stage-player, a parasite. Cato reproaches a proconsul for having connected himself with such an one, and that one was the great Ennius himself. These are singular contradictions in a society which owed all to the poet.

The sole foundation upon which the theory rests are a few words of Cato in his work "Origines," in which it appears that he mentioned the custom in old times to sing verses during meals in praise of the virtue of great men. But this tradition proves nothing beyond the existence of some table-songs, which might have been only copies from the Greeks and not of popular origin. In the frugal society of the early Romans, it is not likely that they indulged in anything more than a war-song, a sacred prayer, or a funeral dirge; slow rhapsodies at a banquet of Cincinnatus are more than one can imagine.

It is nothing to the purpose to say that the first three centuries of Roman history are full of the marvellous. The marvellous is not necessarily conveyed by poetry. Moreover, under fabulous accessories very real history is often conveyed. During the war between Turkey and Greece any one might

have seen a mythology in process of being born. To nearly all the patriot leaders, superhuman actions have been attributed. They were said to have conversed with their sabres, with the river that they crossed, or the mountain they ascended; the very birds, with their golden wings, spoke to them in a magical language. According to the tradition, one alone among them has accomplished prodigies which would suffice for a whole army.

Now I have seen with my eyes and touched with my hands these men, and know that they are beings within the scope of reason; but if we allow Niebuhr's line of argument, we ought to conclude that they only exist in virtue of a poem invented by popular pride.

But if, leaving these extrinsic considerations, I examine the reigns of the seven kings of Rome, not only do I fail to perceive about them this character of popular poetry, but I find something quite the contrary. A judicial genius is much more evident than a poetic and spiritualistic genius. This sad Roman people is fonder of writing than singing. Annals, commentaries, a fecial[1] law, a Papirian law, writings on the bark of the ruminal fig-tree; are these the things to be found about the cradle of a rhapsodist?

It does not follow because the Capitol was burnt that all tradition was destroyed, since no one denies that several monuments of the old time were saved from the flames, and one would have been enough to prevent the merely arbitrary in tradition. Besides, popular songs cannot be re-made three or four centuries after the event. Written books may be falsified at any moment, but it is otherwise with the popular song; time alone alters, develops, transforms it, but not at a single stroke, or for the benefit of another age. And if this popular legend had arisen, would the priestly body have so lost all memorials of the past as not to be able to correct it? As history is preserved from confusion concerning the characters of Attila and Charlemagne by the monastic chronicles, so there would have been some contradiction to the popular legend in the annals of the Roman pontiffs.

No, Rome has not risen from the earth, like the cities of Greece, to the sound of the flute; a ruder origin has prepared it for a more austere manhood. The Roman plebeian has not wandered, like the Siegfried of the Nibelungen, in a vague country to the song of the swans on the Rhine, or the sound of the harps of the Valkyries. He is a debtor in the hands of a

[1] *Feciales* among the *ancient* Romans were a college of priests whose duty it was to declare war or make peace.

creditor, a jurisconsult, a Gaius, a Papirius, not a Homer. If he stammers out a poem, it is a litany of labourers, or of arval priests, or rather some shred of the horrible poem of the twelve tables, *lex horrendi carminis*. The patrician rules, the secret name of the city, the ceremonies, the ruses, the dramatic spectacle of the laws; this rather than ideal adventures excited the imagination of the Roman, and early enchained his materialistic spirit. At three leagues from the city was the enemy. Slavery prevailed within and without. We must either, therefore, suppose that the patricians sung at their banquets songs composed against themselves, or that the people in secret made and preserved their poems, and that in a masterly manner: it is difficult to say which hypothesis is least admissible. Moreover, if the plebeians in a barbarous age could produce this poetry, how is it that it disappeared in a moment; how is it that not the least fragment of an attempt to imitate it has been found; and how is it that when the patrician poets, formed on the Greek models, began to appear, that there was no struggle between the two schools?

You cannot, in fact, find the least trace of the popular song in Roman poetry. The most ancient of all the Roman poets commences with a translation of the Odyssey. After him Nævius and especially Ennius, in relating the most familiar histories of old Rome, are under the yoke of Euripides; ascend higher and you find priestly liturgies, but no rhapsodies, no heroic poems, no epic.

To give birth to a series of poems, a people is needed who enjoy a certain degree of idleness or poetic liberty; like that of the German in the Hercynian forest, or of the Gael in his clan, or of the Arab in the desert, or of the troubadour in his joyous home in Provence. To reduce, on the one hand, the rights and moral personality of the Roman plebeians to such a degree as to make them a sort of pariahs or outlaws, and then to attribute to such a people that most manifest result of an enthusiastic sentiment of existence, the epic and heroic poem, is a contradiction that cannot long be maintained.

These papers on Greek and Latin poetry are carried on historically much farther. Quinet traces the decline of the Homeric inspiration in Greek poetry. He shows how imitation was the rule of Latin poetry. Its first poets copied the Greeks, the later ones copying those of the Augustan period. There was no growth, and in its decline it showed how different it was to the modern genius, since it had no sense of the interior evils of men

or of the country. His writings on the Epopees of the Middle Ages are even more interesting than on those of Greece and Rome. For here, instead of battling with popular theories, he simply has to give the results of his own researches.

He devotes separate chapters to the poems of the Arthurian and Carlovingian cycles, contrasting the religious character of the former with the heroic and feudal character of the latter. He commences with a reference to that eternal fount of poetry which rose again with the Christ. Christian Art, as Christian Society, was born in a tomb. What poetry has since been thrown over everything, even over the ruins of the pagan mythology! By the twelfth century a new society had come into existence—a new society and a new poetry. For at that time compositions of thirty, forty, and even a thousand lines broke out in the new-born dialects. What thus enchanted the land of barbarism; what thus set free the tongue of the mute peoples? Christianity in alliance with feudalism. He points out how these poems contain no allusion to the events which were happening in the age in which they were written, although those events included the Crusades, the Albigensian wars, and the siege of Constantinople, and poetic personages such as Innocent III., Cœur de Lion, and Dandolo. "This," he says, "proves irresistibly that men are never struck with the poetry that develops under their own eyes." Their own age is always prosaic compared with some earlier period. He traces the gradual change from the intensely religious tone of the earlier romances to their worldly character in the later, showing how, from the absorbing Ideal of Divine Love, from the pursuit of Wisdom and Holiness, they sank to the romance of human passion; and he attributes this change to a change in dogma, to the Apotheosis of Woman in the person of Mary. The hymns of this epoch, the *Ave Regina* and the *Salve Mater*, begin to take the place of the Psalms of Jehovah, the Madonna of Italy to be substituted for the sad images of the Christ of the catacombs. In place of the quest of the Holy Graal, the poems are filled with adorable phantoms, a series of beautiful creations of female character.

The German poems, however, still preserve the pious tone of the originals. This is especially true of the "Titurel," in which poem, at once gigantic and childlike, Quinet finds a flow of adoring Love that seems but a variation of the famous stanza of St. Francis of Assisi on Divine Love.

In his chapter on the poems of the Carlovingian cycle, he

remarks that their subject was the struggle between Christianity and Mohammedanism. The Ilion of the troubadours was the Catholic civilisation. Although they completely distort the character of the hero around whom they gather, they yield perfect pictures of feudal life, and in giving the genius of the age in which they were written, are more true than history. That genius he describes as "the spirit of untamed force, the lofty pride which seized man in the solitude of donjons, from whence he saw nature at his feet, prostrate and bound to labour for him. A poetry not of Olympian eagles, but of the kites and sparrow-hawks of Gaul."

Finally, he dwells on the splendid opportunity there was for a great poet in the twelfth century, who, out of these scattered poems, and with such a subject, might have made a grand epic: but, probably for the good of the world, such a man did not appear; besides, with the rise of the third estate, a new public was created that felt little interest in poems in which it had only played the roll of serf.

The foregoing views of Quinet on great poems and great individualities prepare the way for his treatment of the most important question of the age, or of any age, —the Authenticity of the Gospels, and the reality of the Existence and Character of Jesus Christ.

In 1835 Strauss published his "Life of Jesus," critically treated. Three years afterwards Edgar Quinet published a criticism of the work. In the preface to the edition of 1857, he connects the effort to turn the Gospel narratives into a myth with that made to efface Homer, and he expresses his strong conviction of the importance of great individualities in sustaining the reason, the intelligence, and virtue of the human race.

That he felt the issues to be infinitely the most important yet approached by the new criticism, none will doubt after reading "Ahasuerus," "Prometheus," and this Examination. We recall here those terrible forebodings in the preface to "Ahasuerus," in which the poet feels a dark Horror approaching his bedside and putting its icy hand on his heart. "Can you sleep?" he says. "As for me, I watch and wait! From the bottom of our souls we already feel what is going to happen. That nothing is already something which makes us pant with terror.

We see it, we touch it, although the world is still unaware of it." And, again, the startling Epilogue in which Eternity engulfs all things, and there is no hope save through a dread future, in which Jesus is to pass through Death to a new Incarnation, a new Passion, a new Aceldama. We remember that this was all published a year before Strauss's book had appeared, and when he was hardly known even in Germany. We remember all this, and are constrained to exclaim with the students of the College of France: The Prophet! the Prophet!

As the years rolled on the worst forebodings of Quinet were fully realised. In 1872 Strauss published "The Old Faith and the New," in which he openly joins the crowd who mocked at Jesus as he hung upon the cross,[1] and denied both the existence of God and a life after death. And this, he intimates, is by no means the bottom of the abyss, as he claims to be optimist compared with Schopenhauer, the philosopher at present most popular in Germany.

In the condensation given of these criticisms in the next few pages, the reader must bear in mind that they refer to Strauss's first book on the subject.

EXAMINATION OF THE "LIFE OF JESUS."

I.

The questions recently raised by German theology do not merely imply the denial of the supernatural in Revelation; they spring from quite another order of thoughts, one for which we have no exact expression in French, so that the first difficulty in treating the question is to define its object. It can only be done by showing the way in which it has come into existence.

The great effect of Dr. Strauss's work is owing to the fact that it is the mathematical consequence of all the works produced beyond the Rhine during the last fifty years. Each author has brought a stone to build this sorrowful sepulchre, and now Germany is quaking and recoiling at its own work.

When the German philosophy replaced that of the eighteenth century, it was thought that what Voltaire had destroyed Kant

[1] "The Old Faith and the New," translated by Mathilde Blind, p. 90.

and Goethe would restore. The result has been quite the opposite, and we now see the philosophies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries embracing each other over the ruins of the same faith.

For if we trace the course of modern German philosophy, we shall see it always tending to this issue. According to Kant, the sacred writings were but a series of moral allegories, a sort of popular commentary on the law of duty. Christ was only an ideal in the conscience of Humanity. The resurrection being left out of this imaginary Christianity, there remained nothing but a religion of death, a Gospel of pure reason, an abstract Jesus without cradle or sepulchre. Later on, pantheism undermined more and more the old banks of orthodoxy. According to the half mystic, half sceptic school of Schelling, the Gospel revelation was only an incident in the eternal revelation of God in Nature and History. Finally, Hegel saw no more in Christianity than an idea, of which the religious value is independent of the testimonies of tradition; which comes to the same thing as saying that the moral principle of the Gospel is divine even if its historical basis is uncertain.

But the man who, above all others, has affected modern German thought is Spinosa. His spirit is at the bottom of all its poetry, criticism, philosophy, theology. In his treatise on Theology, and in his letters from Oldenburg, may be discovered the germ of all the propositions sustained later on in German exegesis. He is the author of the idea of interpreting the Bible according to natural phenomena. "All," he said, "related in the revealed books happened conformably to the laws of nature."

It would require the pen of the author of the "Provinciales" to give an adequate impression of the absurd results produced in Biblical history by the school which formed its system on this principle. The shapeless skeleton of Christianity it produced did not long retain its hold on German thought.

To convert Germany to doubt, a system was necessary which hid scepticism under faith; made a long round to reach its object, bent on imagination, on poetry, and on spirituality, seemed to transfigure while it rejected; to build while it destroyed, to affirm while it denied.

All these characteristics are found in the system of allegorical interpretation, or, to speak in the language of the seventeenth century, in the method by which the mystical sense is substituted for the literal. The introduction of this system into the Church is chiefly due to Origen; it dominated throughout the Middle Age, and even had a powerful influence over Pascal and Fénélon. The axiom of the method is, "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life;" but the danger is that the Spirit

may so increase as finally to kill and entirely substitute itself for the letter. In 1790 Eichorn only admits the first chapter of Genesis as emblematic. In 1803 Bauer extended the principle, in his Mythology of the Bible, to the whole of the Old Testament. Very quickly the system leaps over these bounds and is applied to the New. All that relates to angels, demons, or miracles is thus explained; after a time the narratives of the Infancy of Jesus are treated in a similar manner; finally, nothing is left but his birth and ascension, and these at last are metamorphosed into fables.

Here, again, we see the influence of Spinoza. He had said, "I accept according to the letter the passion, death, and burial of Christ, but the resurrection allegorically." This principle set afloat, there was very soon not a moment of the life of Christ which was not metamorphosed into symbol, or emblem, or type, or myth by some theologian or other. Every one used it, satisfied that at the worst, they were only giving up the mortal part of Christianity, while they the better preserved that which was essential—the soul of the doctrine. An instance of what is meant may be found in Hegel's Lessons on Religion, where he speaks of *analysing the Son.*

Thus these divines accomplished in Germany, with perfect tranquillity of conscience, what in France was the work of philosophers. Each day they effaced a word of the Bible, but with the least possible disquietude as to what in the end would become of their faith. However, Schleiermacher, the greatest among them, had a presentiment that a crisis was at hand.

To this system of substituting the letter for the spirit was joined habits of criticism imbibed from the study of profane antiquity. Heathen wisdom was so much exalted that it was easy to confound it with the wisdom of the Gospel. If Christianity was ancient mythology in embryo, Christianity itself was a perfected mythology. Moreover, the ideas of Wolf on the Iliad, and Niebuhr on Ancient Rome, were soon applied to the Bible. The denial of the personality of Homer naturally led to the denial of the personality of Moses.

De Wette is the first to enter this path. According to him the Pentateuch contains no more truth than the Greek epics. As the Iliad and the Odyssey were the works of the rhapsodists, the Pentateuch, with the exception of the Decalogue, was the continued and anonymous work of the priesthood. He urges that his method should be applied to the New Testament. Others carried the same sort of criticism farther, depriving Moses not only of the authorship of the Pentateuch, but of the Decalogue and of the idea of the Unity of God. Finally, the God of Moses shares the same fate as Moses himself.

The only relief in the midst of this universal negation is that the critic who denies one book will defend another. Every hypothesis gives itself out as a truth acquired by science until another hypothesis equally clever comes to overturn it. And so each theologian in turn casts away a page of the Bible. The strange ardour of these clergymen to sacrifice the body and the letter of their belief recalls that night of the Constituent Assembly, when one aristocrat after another came forward to burn his patent of nobility.

After treating the Old Testament thus, it was not to be expected the critics would stop at the New. To explain the literal agreement of the synoptists there were theories upon theories, ending in a tendency to deny that they were ocular witnesses, and to admit them only as expressions, more or less vague, of tradition. The debate at last seemed to concentrate itself on the authenticity of St. John. "This is henceforth the great question for us," said Dr. Strauss to me, after a long conversation on these matters.

II.

"The Life of Jesus" was, then, exactly the work that might have been expected from the bent of things. Though obscurely published, the sensation it caused was so alarming, that the Prussian Government, contrary to their wont, consulted the clergy on its suppression. Neander, deputed to answer, declared that though the book attacked all his beliefs, he would not have its liberty interfered with, as discussion was the sole judge of truth and error.

How was it that, in a land full of theological novelties, this book disconcerted the most audacious? Because, as before stated, it was the legitimate consequence of all that had been going on for half a century. The author brought together for the first time the most contradictory doctrines and schools—materialism, spiritualism, mysticism; the admirers of symbols, of explanations, natural, figurative, or dogmatic; of visions, of animal magnetism, of allegories, of etymologies—and expounding them, placing them in difficulties, and breaking them up one by the other, he forced them all, by an untiring dialectic, to the same conclusion. Tearing down the metaphysical veil which threw a haze over these doctrines, he led the question to the simplest terms; so that every one saw uncovered for the first time the extent of the destruction accomplished. Like Mark Antony, he raised the robe of Cæsar. All could see the wounds that had been made in the dark.

From the pantheism of the modern schools, Dr. Strauss bor-

rows the art of depreciating and diminishing historic individualities. All personal existence annoys him, and seems a usurpation. Thus, while he does not totally deny the existence of Jesus, he reduces that existence to a shadow. Jesus, he admits, was baptized by John, gathered together disciples, and succumbed in the end to the hatred of the Pharisees. This, joined to a few details, is the sole basis on which, according to him, men have built up the life of Christ.

His theory is that the people of Palestine, under the influence of the Messianic hope, clothed by degrees the true form of Jesus with all the characteristic features attached to that hope in the Old Testament; popular tradition, accepting as real the actions which were there attributed to the coming Christ, fashioning, increasing, correcting, rendering divine the person of Jesus of Nazareth, after the type conceived by the prophets.

Quinet then proceeds to give a very careful analysis of Strauss's criticisms. Of his method he says, it resembles that of Voltaire and the English school; of his style he says, it is cold, hard, and geometric. And nothing seems to astonish him more than the tranquil way Strauss proceeds with a work which, if successful, would prove one of the saddest ever effected. Yet for fifteen hundred pages, and in the same tone in which he might treat of an interpolation in Homer or in Pindar, he disputes with the Christ his cradle and his sepulchre, leaving him only his cross.

Quinet's candour, as a polemic, may be judged by the remark with which he concludes a most careful analysis of this now famous work. He declares that it would be most unfair to judge of the book by his account of it.

> The spirit of a work cannot thus be reproduced in a few lines. Nor is it possible for me to do justice to the author's many fine qualities. He has rendered the painful service of probing and laying bare the sensitive wound of our time with more vigour, logic, and intrepidity than any one else; and he has done this work so perfectly, that indifference itself has started up from its couch and uttered a cry of pain.
>
> With a desire like his own to keep to the truth, I must recognise that it is clear that his system is conceived in advance and not necessarily born of the facts; but that, determined to compel everything to support it, he has not allowed himself to

be turned aside by any obstacle, so that, drawn on by a logical intolerance almost amounting to fanaticism, he emulates with perfect *sang froid* the exterminating spirit of Dupuis and Volney.

Another objection I make is, that the author's book-knowledge is so prodigious as to stifle every sentiment of reality. In this absolute negation of all life, you are tempted to question yourself, to know if your most personal impressions, if your breath and your soul are not by chance a copy of some wandering text of the book of fate, and if you may not one day find your own existence unexpectedly contested as a plagiarism on some unheard-of history.

However naturally a story springs from the ordinary course of things, Dr. Strauss declares that it contains no historical truth, and can only be a myth. But thus to measure Nature and Thought on the bed of Procrustes is to weaken and destroy them both. To accept the impressions of an inert society only so far as they accord with those which would be made in the present day, is a strange limitation of the human heart. Are we quite sure that we are living within the bounds of everything possible? O doctor! how many miracles pass in souls which book-knowledge will never teach us. What enthusiasm, what love, what revolutions occur beyond even the ken of our greatest masters! And in them men are taught things which they could not learn from all the libraries in the world.

For example, our author, noting how, with a word, Jesus is said to have captivated his apostles, makes this apparently judicious reflection: first, that it is strange that the Christ should not have wished to prove them; second, that it is incredible that they should have been willing to quit their houses and families and to follow him, without having learnt more of him by experience,—objections which he considers supported by the manifest contradiction between this easy obedience and the doubt into which they subsequently fall. For this and other reasons he considers the calling of the apostles a symbolical story forged thirty years later in imitation of Elijah calling his servant Elisha.

But why, I ask, ascribe to imitation and pharisaic erudition what is so natural? Who does not see, on the one hand, the authority of Jesus, the power in his looks, in his voice, in his mysterious word; and on the other, the fishermen under the power of that word carried away, subjugated, fascinated by the greatness which had appeared in their midst? Is it in any other fashion that enthusiasm lays hold of souls, or that men give themselves to one another? Is it not by a sudden rapture, by an unreflecting transport, by an entire abandonment of itself

to the will, the looks, the thought of another, rather than, as the German doctor supposes, by slow and successive experiences of the superiority of the master? Who has not known examples of this kind, not only in public but in private life, even the most obscure, where a day or an hour, or even less, rarely passes without its being lit up by one of these wonderful illuminations?

Is it experience, is it temporising which effects these miracles of friendship, of heroism? Is it not rather the work of a supreme moment in which all is lost or gained? "The disciples have doubted shortly after," you say. Another proof that you are here in the domain of truth, of reality, of history. What more natural than falling away after excess of enthusiasm? These are traits invented neither by poetic tradition nor mythology. It is men, not myths, we have met here.

To such an extent has this enthusiasm been experienced and proved to be real, that, for my own part, I cannot read this beginning of the Gospel without hearing once again the echo of that most real voice, saying to us as it did to the fishermen of Galilee: "Rise up and walk, go ye into all the world." It is the *Fiat Lux* in the genesis of Christianity; the movement that originates all the others. At this word you see the disciples rise up and compel the old society to move before them, the Roman Empire in its turn rise up and obey the impulsion, then the Church, then the councils, then the Papacy, then the Reformation, and so this movement propagates itself from age to age, from generation to generation, until without one intermission it reaches us.

Another example. I choose it because it furnishes an excellent abridgment of the accustomed method of the author. It is the scene of the temptation. Strauss begins by showing the difficulties, the improbabilities, the fictions which are found in the accounts of the evangelists: a fast of forty days, the apparition of the devil in a palpable form, Jesus transported to a pinnacle of the temple, then on to a mountain from whence he sees all the kingdoms of the world, the legion of angels who bring him food from heaven. In dealing with the natural explanations hitherto given of these circumstances, Strauss has the best of it; he proves that the scene is neither a vision, a dream, nor a parable.

This refutation effected, he opens the Old Testament. He finds there all the traits of the scene related by the New. Moses, Elijah fasting forty days in the desert; Satan tempting the people, who call themselves the Sons of God, forty years in the desert; the angels bringing Elijah food; and he asks, Are not these the models from which, later on, Christian tradition copied its story of the temptation?

Complete as this analysis seems, it is wanting in a most important point,—a consideration of the interior life of Christ. Jesus comes to receive baptism. He publishes for the first time his mission. About to reveal himself, he gathers up his strength in the desert. Who can know the pangs, the struggles, the inward enemies that assailed this new Jacob wrestling with an unknown angel? Before declaring war with all visible nature, before casting humanity into the future as a world into a new orbit, who knows if the revealer[1] did not hesitate in his own heart; if the entire past did not spread itself out before him as a snare; if the mute universe, clothing itself in borrowed splendour, did not by a hundred voices call upon him, instead of struggling with it, to prostrate himself before it and to adore it; if, borne on the wings of his thoughts to the pinnacle of the temple and on the holy hill, he did not from thence behold, on the one hand, the kingdoms of the world with their peoples bowing down and submissive, on the other, the immeasurable empire of minds with ever-suffering love, and the cross of Calvary in place of the sceptre of Judah? Who knows if in this moment he did not feel in advance the bloody sweat of Gethsemane, and if, in the height of all this anguish, he had not already cried out at the sight of the earth risen up against him: "My Father, my Father, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

If the doubt could approach him then, there most assuredly was Satan on his throne of darkness. Thus this history is by no means so illusory as is pretended. On the contrary, it would depict that which was most private, that is to say, most real, in the life of Jesus. Recovered from this deadly depression, the inward light reappears. The heavens re-open. From this moment until Calvary the Christ regains possession of himself. Legions of angels descend into his heart. They finish by strengthening with heavenly nourishment his spirit fatigued with the combat. In all this, where is the impossible? Where is the imitation? Where is the fable? And how can we have an idea of the Gospel if we do not see in it a continual transfiguration of the inner history and of the thoughts of Christ?

How many other questions remain to be thus more closely examined: if, for instance, the epoch of Christ was a likely one for the invention of a mythology? in what way the science of Alexandria could control imagination in Jerusalem? And this question would lead to an inquiry into the critical spirit of the Roman world: if thirty years is sufficient for the establishment of an entirely fabulous tradition; if the tone of the canonical books is not quite distinct from that of the apocryphal; if the

[1] The revelation of this experience could only have been made by him who endured it.

Acts of the Apostles does not present similar narratives to those of the Gospels; if in the latter the parables are not expressly separated from the narrative, showing that the evangelists observed the demarcation between allegory and history; if the preface to St. Luke, so reasonable, methodic, and philosophic, looks like the preface to a collection of myths; finally, if the Epistles of St. Paul do not bear such an imprint of reality that their witness casts a strong light on the preceding epoch; their author being a man so like ourselves, pleading for the truth and historic integrity of the very persons Strauss attacks.

With regard to the comparison between the Gospels and the poems of popular origin, I accept it and say: Charlemagne has been transfigured by the imaginations of the Middle Age; but under the fable was hidden history; under the fiction of the twelve paladins is the author of the Capitularies, the conqueror of the Saxons, the legislator and warrior. How then can there be but a shadow under the traditions of the apostles?

III.

Those who go far into this examination must be struck with the strange fact that Christianity is an effect without a cause. How is it possible that this despoiled figure of the Christ, this shadow of which no appreciable vestige remains, can have dominated the world? I see the moral universe overturned, but the moving power escapes me. If in the New Testament there is no originating force, from whence comes this powerful life? If the New Law is nothing but a reproduction of the Old; if the miracle of the renewal of the world has never been accomplished, what do we here; how is it we are not still within the walls of the ancient city.

The personal grandeur of Christ is better demonstrated by the movement and spirit of the times which have succeeded him than by the Gospels themselves. If I knew nothing of the Scriptures, and had never heard the name of Jesus, I must always have thought that some extraordinary impulsion took place in the world about the time of the Cæsars. Whence came this impulsion and its wonderful results?

When Strauss says that he regards the invention of the compass and of steam-boats as of more importance than the cure of a few poor sick folk in Galilee, he is evidently the dupe of his own reasoning; for he knows as well as I do that the miracle of Christianity is not there, but rather in the great marvel of Humanity, cured of the evil of slavery, of the leprosy of caste, of the blindness of pagan sensuality, able to rise up and carry its bed far away from the old world. He knows that the

wonder of Christianity is not so much in water having been changed into wine, as in a world changed by a single thought, in the sudden transfiguration of the old law, in the casting off the old man, in the empire of the Cæsars struck with stupor, in the conquest of the conquering barbarians, in giving birth to a Reformation that brought all its dogmas into discussion, to a Philosophy that denied them, to a French Revolution that sought to kill it, while it only served to realise it more completely than ever. These are the miracles by which Christianity appeals to us.

What! this incomparable originality of Christ nothing but a perpetual imitation of the past; the most wonderfully new character in all history a man perpetually occupied in forming himself, or, as some later critics say, in posing after the figures of the ancient prophets!

And supposing the evangelists do contradict each other, after all it is only on accessory points; they all agree in the character of Jesus Christ himself. How absurd to suppose that this harmonious character is the result of a confused mingling of thoughts springing up from all kinds of races, creeds, and institutions that this vague multitude should all join in the same ideal, and that ideal should be a character conspicuous for its unity and its distinctness from the past.

So far were the common people of Palestine from any such ideal, that they were constantly misunderstanding the simplest words of Jesus. Even his own disciples failed to understand the spiritual nature of his kingdom, though he sought to teach it in every parable.

The continual miracle of the Gospel is the reign of a soul which felt itself greater than the visible universe. This miracle is no illusion, no allegory, but a great reality. As palpable Nature, the Sea, the primitive Night, the shoreless Chaos have in paganism served as a real foundation to the inventions of the peoples, in the same manner the infinite Soul of the Christ has served as the foundation upon which the whole Christian theogony has been built; for what is the Gospel if it is not the revelation of an inner world?

And here I meet with an extraordinary mode of reasoning:

The first figure in a series, it is argued, cannot be greater than the last; it would be contrary to all development. From whence it follows that Christ gave place to St. Paul, St. Paul to St. Augustine, St. Augustine to Gregory VII., Gregory VII. to Luther, and that finally, we, being at the extremity of the series, must be the highest of all.

But since when has the inspiration of beauty, of justice, of truth, progressed after an arithmetic or geometric fashion? It

is clear that the question is not simply of the personality of Christ, but of the very principle of all personality. We are to be driven to admit a Humanity in which there are peoples, but no individuals, generations of ideas without forms, that die, and are reborn to die again at the foot of the invisible cross, on which remains for ever suspended the impersonal Christ of pantheism.

Dr. Strauss expresses this conclusion clearly when he resumes his doctrine in this sort of metaphysical litany. "The Christ," he says, "is not an individual but an idea, or rather a race, to wit—Humanity. In the human race, behold the God made man, behold the Child of the visible virgin and of the Invisible Father, that is to say, matter and spirit; behold the Saviour, the Redeemer, the Impeccable; behold him who dies, who rises again, who ascends to heaven. In believing in this Christ, in his death, in his resurrection, Man is justified before God."

To despoil the individual, to enrich the species, to diminish man in order to aggrandise humanity, is the tendency of the times. We place to the account of all what we dare not attribute to ourselves. Self-love is at once humbled and deified. There is a certain titanic grandeur in the idea that enchants us. Is the grandeur real, or do we deceive ourselves?—this is the question.

If the Individual cannot be the just one, the holy one pre-eminently; if he is not a like spirit with God; if he is incapable of rising to the supreme ideal of virtue, of beauty, of liberty, of love, how can these attributes become those of the species? How many men go to make up Humanity? Will two or three go to make up this ideal, or if that will not do, will two or three millions succeed any better? It is a vain attempt if the human person is only a nothing alienated from God; the peoples also are but collections of nothing, and in adding nation to nation, empire to empire, we only give birth to nothing; so that the more we pretend to the infinite, the more we succeed in embracing in Humanity a completer nothing, since it is composed of all the nothings together.

If this is true, the result is that all life, all greatness, as well as all misery, emanates from the Individual. The whole spirit of Christianity tends to render the idea of the person absolutely sacred. For if the life of the God-made man has a sense comprehensible for us, it is in showing us that within each conscience dwells the Infinite as well as in the soul of the human race, and that the mind of each man can spread and dilate until it embraces and penetrates the whole moral universe.

Dr. Strauss concludes by declaring that, after all, his book in no way violates the belief of the Christian Church; that he is

orthodox, though in an indirect way. For it is one of the maxims of modern casuists that it is not necessary to know if the Gospel rests on an historic basis. Philosophy declares that if a doctrine is in itself reasonable, it is not necessary to trouble one's self as to its origin in time.

Spinosa is the author of this remedy. "To open to you my mind entirely," he says, "I will tell you that it is not at all indispensable to believe in Christ according to the flesh, but certainly in that Eternal Son of God, that is to say, in that Eternal Wisdom which manifests itself in all things, principally in the mind of man, but more than in all others, in Jesus Christ. In these metaphysics is hidden the abyss into which German theology withdraws every time it seeks to avoid its own consequences."

From this mixture of metaphysics and theology a learned language has been formed, which tends first to produce a double doctrine, one for the clergy, the other for the people, and second, to make it almost impossible for a man to know on what ground he stands, whether he believes or doubts. Who has gained, who has lost, by this hazardous game? Is it philosophy or religion? It is time we clearly informed ourselves.

IV.

The relations of Religion and Philosophy since the Christian era have been threefold. First, we have religion among the fathers, dominating philosophy; then among the scholastics, religion and philosophy entering into alliance; finally, philosophy begins to turn against religion; gradually the struggle becomes desperate, until philosophy, triumphing, magnanimously comprehends, admits, raises up, rehabilitates religion. Thus at first religion transformed philosophy, now philosophy transforms religion.

This explains how it is that the Germans, in the midst of all their scepticism, maintain such a profound calmness. They do not regard themselves as having given up either religion or Christianity. The idea has been preserved by the sacrifice of the letter. This thread, impalpable as it may be, keeps them from feeling that they have quite lost their way. Even when their criticism is more murderous than Voltaire, they cry out with Polyeuctes, "I am a Christian."

The agreement of Science and Religion is the problem which all the schools set themselves, but in arriving at the solution the Christian Institution is passed through so many transformations that it often comes out at last a something for which no language has a name. Philosophy no longer denies Christianity,

it does worse; it protects it, seizing on each of its dogmas to make out of them a theorem. If Christianity submits to be treated as a piece of ductile clay, no doubt the alliance will continue; philosophy has everything to gain by such a treaty of peace.

The metaphysics of Hegel vaunt themselves as being in absolute conformity with positive religion. To believe their professors, they are but the catechism transfigured, the identity of science, and the evangelical religion, or rather, the Bible of the absolute. But go to the bottom of this orthodoxy and what do you find? A tradition without a gospel, a dogma without immortality, a Christianity without Christ. Is this what awaits the Church?

This question of the identity of science and belief can only be solved by perpetual approximation. It is what the mathematicians call an incommensurable, with this difference, that here the least fraction neglected means a world. In reality, neither religion nor philosophy can absorb each other. They are reborn one of another without ever being able to convert each other.

If man had only reason he would fall from negation to negation into the last circle of nothingness. If he had only faith he would be carried away without return, beyond all reality, to the farthest limits of the infinite. The one force counteracts the other, and of their opposition is born the regular movement of Humanity. If this apparent war were to cease, all order, as all movement, would be destroyed; hence we conclude, that neither those who would bring everything to reason, nor those who would bring everything to faith, possess the truth.

Philosophy believes itself the inheritor of all that is permanent in Christianity, and yet at the same time it sets forth ideas which contradict the very spirit of the Christian religion. It attempts, in Germany, to substitute Pantheism for the spirit of the Gospel. Is Christianity supple enough to bear this without ending in a rupture with philosophy? Will the personal God of the Cross be supplanted by the God-Substance without the people perceiving the change, the steps being so gradual?

The Christ on the Calvary of modern Theology endures to-day a passion more cruel than that of Golgotha. Neither the Pharisees nor the scribes of Jerusalem have presented him with a more bitter drink than the doctors of our time have poured out. To what transfiguration will he be submitted? Is the God of Jacob and of St. Paul to be transformed into the God of Parmenides, of Descartes, and of his disciple Spinosa?

But those who wish to extirpate Christianity will not succeed,

for it is founded upon the grandeur and independence of the person. Those who would reject philosophy will be equally baffled, for it has revealed the laws necessary to the human race. The individual and society, man and humanity, these two powers are everywhere present in theology and philosophy as in politics; who will make them agree?

If, among my readers, there are those who, in the religious agitations of their time, see only an image of ruin, especially if there are any to whom the preceding pages have caused one of those sorrows which should be sacred for all, I will remind them of that day when the disciples, having seen their Master descend into the sepulchre, began to doubt and to despair of the future. They did not know what to do but to weep in secret; that which they had expected not having happened, they were almost ready to give up believing anything more. They said one to another, "He whom we have known was not the Son of God, for he is dead on the cross." They said again, "Who will take away the stone from the sepulchre, for we have not the strength to attempt it?" But some among them, drawing near to Calvary, have perceived their Master in all the glory of heaven, and they rejoice with one accord unto the end of time.

So even to-day the entire world is a great sepulchre, in which all beliefs, all hopes, seem for ever buried; the seal of doubt has been placed on them by an invisible hand, and we, seized with fear, asked each other, Who will raise the stone of this tomb? A great number among us weep in secret, having no longer any confidence in that we once most loved. But this stone which oppresses us all will in the end be broken, were it a thousand times heavier than all the worlds together. From the depth of the darkness the God eternally old, eternally new, will be reborn, clothed in light more brilliant than that of Tabor. This at least is the faith of him who writes these lines.

CHAPTER VI.

PARIS, STRASBURG, LYONS. 1836–1839.

"Mostly men's many-featured faces wear
Looks of fixed gloom, or else of restless care."
—*F. W. Faber.*

THE fund of vital energy that Edgar Quinet possessed is shown by the varied lives he led, now studying for months together in his secluded home at Heidelberg, now for months in the full tide of Parisian society. The winter was the time he generally chose for his visits to Paris; he was there in 1837–38, from November until March, but he was not always so long away from home.

He was an energetic worker. His plan was to take up one thing at a time and give his whole mind to it. That finished, he felt free, and enjoyed the change to an entirely new subject. After the publication of "Napoleon" he hesitated to throw himself into another long work without the means of living. So in 1836 we find him publishing quite a series of articles on various subjects. In May "Notes on Italy" appeared, in October "The Field of the Battle of Waterloo." But Germany still was his theme, and in this month another series of papers was published on German subjects:—"The Prejudices which separate Germany from France;" "Fall of Spiritualism;" "Modern Theology;" "Religion of Matter;" "Fatalism and Indifference;" "Illusions of Industry;" and a poem called "The Borders of the Rhine."

In these papers Quinet complained of the absurd notions concerning the French entertained in Germany. It was there

supposed that French men were thin, grinning, made-up coxcombs; French women, dressed-up dolls, pampered and spoilt, heartless, brainless, soulless, the centre of all kinds of dissoluteness, an abyss of frivolity. German criticism on French authors he declared to be a regular system of depreciation: Molière was flat; Bossuet, vulgar; Montesquieu, declamatory; Corneille, tautological. The German journals he accused in the same manner, of systematically throwing mud at everything French.

Quinet's remarks were received remarkably well in Germany; they were translated into the papers, and made him friends rather than enemies.

In April 1836 his "Modern Greece" was translated into Russian and published at Moscow. During this year he was engaged in writing a series of papers on "The Epic Poets; Latin and French." These papers, as well as most of the smaller works, appeared in the "Revue des Deux Mondes." His French critics had thought him too German in his manner, too apt to dwell in the clouds. He aimed more and more at simplicity and clearness, and at this time he is constantly receiving letters recognising this change in his style.

In March 1837 De Lamennais asked him to co-operate in his journal "Le Monde." He also proposed in connection with General Dembinski, a Polish patriot for whom he had a great esteem, to write something on Poland.

During the winter 1837-38, he became, as he usually did when long separated from those he loved, much depressed and inclined to see everything in the worst light.

Immediately on his arrival in Paris he writes:—

"Never have minds been more dejected or spiritless than to-day. What an inert, sordid mass! How are these people ever to be reached? In the end, some souls yet alive in this desert may perhaps listen to me, and I work for the future, come what may! I speak to the deaf and the blind; but I know it beforehand. Every one shuts himself up in his hole, seeing no one, and cursing the human race. This is the state in which I have found all my friends. Two men remain at

their post, and are true to themselves. M. de Lamennais, pen in hand, and my poor General Dembinski, who writhes and gnaws in idleness, like a lion in his cage. Fauriel is getting old and chilled by the Institute. However, he is always ready to oblige me, if I ask him. Michelet satisfies me; the rest seem to me cruelly empty.

"I am determined not to allow myself to be chilled by age or by this moribund society: I make my heart like iron, they shall make no impression on me. . . . . My dear Francis Corcelles, whom I have found again, is very different. He is uprightness itself. Magnin is in the Royal Library. He is by nature a man of heart and spirit; but he, too, is terribly shrivelled up. I should never stop if I were to go on talking of the decay; it is in the air one breathes, moral life is lost."

Our poet moves about a great deal in society. Here is a programme for one week:—

"Tuesday, musical party, Madame Belgiojoso's; Wednesday, Madame Hoche's; Thursday, Miss Clarke's; Friday, Odilon Barrot's; Saturday, again to the salon of the *Principessa*, or to that of M. Lamartine, where I seldom go, caring less than ever for sentimental intrigue; finally, Sunday, Madame Récamier's: my most agreeable soirée. There all the Corcelles are to be seen, the best and simplest people in the world."

Lamartine's salon comes in for another severe remark. "Nothing," says Quinet, "could appear more stiff and affected than this poetic and diplomatic salon." The monotonous salons of Paris, with their dryness and gilding, tire him. As we have somewhat the same testimony from M. Guizot concerning the Parisian salons in the early years of Louis Philippe's reign, it was not simply a melancholy humour that led Quinet to take so austere a view. The minister thought it owing to the growth of the democratic spirit, while the poet, there is little doubt, attributed this decay to the blighting influence of the Orleans Government.

Quinet is always very sarcastic in his references to the citizen king and to M. Guizot. Of the retirement of the latter from office, in April 1836, he says:—

"Far from regretting M. Guizot, I am delighted at his retreat.

I know too well his Gascon manner. Another will be straightforward, we shall at least know where we are, a thing impossible with these tenebrous *doctrinaires*."

The king was evidently much ridiculed in the circles in which Quinet moved; and he answers for the truth of the following story. The scene is a sitting of the Council with reference to a Speech from the Throne in 1840:—

"'It was written by M. de Rémusat and read aloud by him. The king laughed frequently, and ended by saying, 'Give me that pretty little writing, I shall have many things to scratch out.' Upon that, he goes out and returns with a speech written in his great round hand, prepared by himself. He read it in his turn. Rémusat and the rest say 'that its language was crawling (*ventre à terre*), incredibly base.' With one voice they said it could not be accepted. Fresh whinings from His Majesty, the whole followed by the offer of resignation of the ministry."

One thing Guizot and Quinet agree in; it is that Madame Récamier's salon was by far the most charming in Paris. Guizot's testimony is all the more disinterested, since he and his friends were among the few distinguished people not to be met there. Quinet, on the other hand, was evidently a welcome visitor at the Abbaye au Bois. An old conventual-looking building, with a court-yard into which you enter through a narrow gate surmounted with an iron cross, the Abbaye au Bois may still be seen in the Rue de Sèvres, apparently little altered since Madame Récamier's time. Its religious air, combined with the warm greys of its roof and turrets, give it a kind, grandmotherly appearance, not at all suggestive of the literary-aristocratic coterie: the poets, dukes, statesmen, and philosophers, who once made it their daily resort. Madame Récamier was probably the most perfect example of a leader of society the world has ever seen. She had every gift for the position except wealth; but what, no doubt, made her friends so sincerely devoted to her was her disinterestedness. She sought the enjoyment of others more than her own. Men of all parties

flocked to her humble apartments: Legitimists, Bonapartists, Republicans, and a few Orleanists. Madame Récamier, however, had an idol to whom she required all her guests to offer incense. Chateaubriand was quite a new friend compared to some, but after he had appeared on the scene everything was arranged so as to please him.

When Quinet first made Chateaubriand's acquaintance the latter lived in the suburbs of Paris, in a long building one story high, somewhat after the form of a Normandy farmhouse. The short stature of the poet rather took Quinet by surprise; but when he recovered himself he was struck with Chateaubriand's fine head and amiable air. Otherwise his appearance was most odd. He was wrapped up in a greatcoat, and his head enveloped in a silk handkerchief. His hair was white, his shoulders high, his chest broad, the lower part of his body and his legs prodigiously thin. From this little body a strong, shrill voice proceeded. His whole appearance admirably represented the decayed noblesse of France. Considering the style of the man, there was a true harmony in the title of Chateaubriand's autobiography, "Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe;" and in his reading them in a fading light, to a select audience, in that small drawing-room of a retreat for decayed gentlewomen. Edgar Quinet appears to have made part of that audience; for in 1834 he wrote a paper describing a "Reading at the Abbaye au Bois."

"These abbey walls," he says, "were exactly fitted to receive this confession, thus made in advance. You were there in a place which was neither the world nor a retreat. As it grew dark, you would have said that the Corinne of Gérard's painting had dropped her harp to listen to another song than her own. The women hid their tears beneath their veils, the wind sighed through the trees in the garden. At intervals, in the midst of the tremulous emotion and surprise of the listeners, the grand form of the poet stood out in the shade; the clock of the convent, as it sounded the rapid hour, seemed to say at each stroke: 'It is for you, and not for him.'"

In his "Essays on English Literature," Chateaubriand had quoted Quinet's "Napoleon." "There was a time," says the author, "when such a citation would have made me swoon with joy." And now when he could laugh at its emptiness he had his own turn of social honour. Soon after he arrived in Paris in 1837, he was asked to read the third part of "Prometheus" at Madame Récamier's. She was at that time occupying a house, lent her, in the *Rue d'Anjou*, and was very ill from a nervous affection that almost extinguished her voice.

"Only able to speak in a low whisper, but always beautiful and carefully dressed, she reclined under a canopy. At the corner of the mantelpiece, M. de Chateaubriand, another wreck, not less magnificent; a niece of Madame Récamier, and the two intimates, Ballanche and Ampère, were there also. Of a society thus nobly composed, I was prepared for compliments, which as a matter of fact were not wanting. The only thing that really pleased me, has been to learn that M. de Chateaubriand said in my absence, that he thought 'Prometheus' the best of my works. Madame Récamier seemed properly edified, and the reader retired quite satisfied with the amount of incense received."

Another house which pleased him was that of Madame Hoche, widow of the republican General. Although she had lost her husband nineteen years, she still lived for his memory. The house was full of souvenirs. A bust of the General stood in the centre of her drawing-room, which was chiefly frequented by military men. It was the only salon in which Quinet found a decided character; and it carried him back to 1796.

The most sumptuous of all his hosts was the Princess Belgiojoso, an Italian, and an authoress. At her house he sometimes dined, meeting Cousin, Mignet, Ballanche, Fauriel, and other people of note. These meetings with Cousin appear to have been anything but agreeable to Quinet, as the philosopher always behaved as if they were still the warmest friends.

"The comedian was there," writes Quinet to his mother; "he came to me and took me by the hand with an effusion of inexhaustible tenderness. What a Tartufe!"

At the same table he met Odilon Barrot, whose face seemed to him sincere and honest, and as if he was an original man.

On one occasion there was a grand soirée at Madame Belgiojoso's; six hundred persons were present, a great crowd, whose only amusement seemed to be to look at each other. The Countess Guiccioli, the celebrated mistress of Lord Byron, was there. Quinet describes her to his mother as short and squat in figure, yet easy and supple in her movements, with a statuesque head, fair complexion, flowing ringlets, blue eyes, and large features.

Although so austere in his principles, there was something extremely winning in the appearance and manner of Edgar Quinet, so that he always appears to have been a favourite with the fair sex. In addition to Madame Récamier, the Princess Belgiojoso, &c., we find him at this time the welcome guest of Napoleon's adopted daughter, the Princess Stéphanie of Baden.[1] Thus at Mannheim, in May 1836, he spent half a day with her, and she was anxious that he and his wife should spend the summer with her at Freiburg. He speaks of her as a woman remarkable for her good sense and grace. The author of "Ahasuerus" was also much honoured by the Duchess of Orleans. An ardent friend was the original but rather whimsical lady to whom frequent references occur in the letters,—Miss Clarke, still a figure in Parisian society as the venerable widow of M. Mohl, the German *savant*. She seemed, he thought, like some character from one of Hoffman's[2] fantastic tales.

In this spring of 1838, reference is made in one of his letters to his going to hear Talleyrand lecture at the Institute. The wily old statesman was then seventy-four years of age, and within two or three months of his end.

[1] Some interesting details of the early life of this lady are given in Madame de Rémusat's Memoirs, corroborating Quinet's estimate of her character. Vol. ii. pp. 116–120, 377–381.

[2] W. Hoffman, one of the most original of German story-tellers, 1776–1822.

On another occasion Quinet is at the Chamber of Deputies and hears Thiers speak, and comes to the conclusion that he is a personally ambitious man.

At certain weekly dinners Edgar Quinet met Montalambert, De Tocqueville, De Cormenin, Sainte-Beuve, Lacordaire, Magnin, Ampère, and Francis Corcelles. Corcelles and Michelet were his most intimate friends. He saw the latter nearly every day. Their oneness of heart was so thorough, that after two and forty years they would both say, "We are one and the same person."

This same winter he makes his first acquaintance with Mickiewicz, the famous Polish poet. He is delighted with him at once.

"No one," he says, "could have an air more gracious or more wild. His moral elevation seems remarkable; there is about him a slight touch of mysticism, but a mysticism that is in harmony with his fine and grand nature. He has an air both young and natural, which at this time is not the rule. He is irritated against France; but at this moment what Pole would not be?"

Another acquaintance that he made at this time was Heinrich Heine. He had thought that his caustic criticism on his works had offended him; he was therefore not a little surprised at the appearance of the German poet in his apartments one morning, wearing his sweetest Judaic smile. "They say you are furious against me," said Quinet. "That is quite true," replied Heine, laughing; "but I come to beg you to do me a service." The service consisted in reading over a translation of one of his poems. "Mickiewicz and Heine," Quinet exclaims, "certainly the two most antipodal of men, one might call them the angel and the demon."

Heine criticised Quinet with equal freedom; and a few years later touched off his portrait for a German newspaper in one of those humorous sketches which, though bordering on caricature, enable us better than anything else to realise how a great man appeared in ordinary life to his contemporaries. Far from having in

it the venom Quinet attributes to Heine's writings, it reveals a warm and honest sympathy with its subject, rendering it worth any amount of unappreciative praise. Moreover, it probably gives us traits very characteristic of Quinet, the Wanderer and the Poet.[1]

"Michelet and Quinet are not only good comrades, faithful brothers in arms, but minds of exactly the same cast, with the same sympathies, the same antipathies. Only the soul of one is softer, I should say more Indian; while in the nature of the other there is something harder, more Gothic. Michelet recalls to me the large flowers and the powerful perfumes of the gigantic poetry of the Mahabharata; Quinet reminds one of the Songs, not less stupendous, but more rugged and abrupt, of the Scandinavian Edda. Quinet has a northern nature, he might be a German; for he has altogether the German character, in the good as in the bad acceptation of the word; the German air breathes in all his writings. When I read 'Ahasuerus,' or any of the other poetical works of Quinet, I feel exactly as if I were at home. I fancy I can hear the nightingales of my own land; I smell the perfume of the Suabian violets; sounds from the garden, I know so well, murmur round my head; moreover, I hear the chime of the well-known bells: *profondeur allemande, douleur de penseur allemande, sensibilité allemande, bourdonnement de hannetons allemands;* with at times just the least touch of German wearisomeness. Yes, Edgar Quinet is ours; he is German, good German stuff, notwithstanding his late assumption of the airs of one who threatens to eat us alive. The rude and rather uncouth manner in which he has attacked Germany in the 'Revue des Deux Mondes,' is anything but French, but precisely like that downright fisticuff, that genuine roughness, by which we recognise a fellow-countryman. Edgar is entirely German, not only in mind but in body; and whoever meets him in the streets takes him for a certainty to be some theologian from Halle, who, having broken down in his examinations, has dragged his heavy steps to France, there to dissipate his moody humour.' A massive, austere form, carelessly dressed. A large grey overcoat, that might have been stitched by our tailor-author, Jung Stilling. Boots that have perhaps been re-soled by the philosophic shoemaker, Jacob Böhme.

"Quinet for a long time has lived on the other side of the Rhine, especially at Heidelberg, where he made certain studies, and daily intoxicated himself in the lucubrations of 'Creuzer

[1] Heine only knew Quinet between 1836 and 1839. He has never seen him since. This sketch can only be considered as applying to this time.

on Symbols.' He wandered all over Germany on foot, visited our Gothic ruins, and fraternised with the most eminent spectres. In the forest of Teutoberg, where Arminius, the prince of the Cherusci, beat Varus and his legions, Quinet ate Westphalian ham with *Pumpernickel*.[1] Whether he also visited at Moeln the tomb of Eulenspiegel, of grotesque and popular memory, I am not in a position to say; but what I do know positively is, that there are not now three poets in the whole world who are gifted with as much imagination, such wealth of ideas, and such originality as Edgar Quinet."[2]

Liszt, the celebrated pianist, was a devoted admirer of the author of "Ahasuerus."

Among the other interesting persons with whom Quinet was friendly, Armand Carrel must not be forgotten. In quitting Paris in 1836, Quinet passed his last evening in company with him. His untimely end he much regretted.[3] He says :—

"Armand Carrel was a character, a very rare thing. The republican party is buried with him; but it will rise again, only it needs time!"

In 1836 Ary Scheffer made some designs in illustration of "Ahasuerus;" his pupil, the Princess Marie, daughter of Louis Philippe, and the sculptor of the Joan of Arc in the Musée at Versailles, making bas-reliefs from two of them—the angel Rachel at the birth of the Christ, and the angel Rachel pitying Ahasuerus. The originals have been presented by the widow of the poet to the Museum at Bourg.

Two years later Quinet went to Ary Scheffer's studio to look at his picture of "Faust seeing Margaret for the first time." Scheffer declared that Quinet had just the figure that he had wished to give his hero. Quinet felt this no compliment, for he exclaims: "But then it would be a Faust who would never cease to love his Margaret, and who would never have quitted her for the witches' circle."

[1] Pumpernickel, the brown rye-bread commonly eaten in Westphalia.

[2] Lutèce, Letter lviii., pp. 358–360, June 1, 1843.

[3] Armand Carrel was killed in a duel with Emile de Girardin, July 24, 1836.

In the same year the sculptor David made a bas-relief of Quinet in bronze.

In the autumn of 1837 we find him at Stuttgart, meeting at the house of G. Schwab, a Wurtemberg poet, all the choice spirits of the country; visiting the studio of the sculptor Dannecker, who was so afflicted with forgetfulness of names, that he could not remember that of Napoleon. From Stuttgart, Quinet went to Tübingen, where he passed an hour with Uhland. He describes the German poet as having the air of a professor, while over his grave and furrowed face a smile played which recalled that of the excellent and fascinating Manzoni. He asked Uhland how it was he wrote no more poetry; he simply replied that he no longer felt the inspiration, and believed that it was useless to provoke it. At Tübingen he must have had that interview with David Friedrich Strauss, to which he alludes in his criticism of his work. He found him a man who, under an appearance of fatalism, was full of candour, sweetness, gentleness, and modesty, a soul slightly mystical and a little saddened by the noise that his work had caused.

From Tübingen he went on into the Black Forest, proceeding on foot along the deep, winding valley of the Morg. Heavy rains had just cleared up, so that the stream pouring between the darkly-wooded slopes and picturesque châlets was in its glory.

Quinet was accustomed from time to time to write political letters for the "Revue des Deux Mondes." In 1837 the condition of public opinion in England on the Eastern Question seems to have attracted his attention. Our country, was suffering from a slight attack of Russophobia, consequent on the doings of Russia in Circassia. Quinet, who was heart and soul for the oppressed nationalities, urged the alliance of France and England against Russia. Incidentally he makes a long quotation from Mr. Cobden's pamphlet, "Russia, 1836." He did not know the name of the author, as it was published anonymously.

Among the singular personages that hover in the background of the picturesque circle that surround Edgar Quinet's infancy, was a tall man, with brilliant eyes and ready smile, arrayed in solemn garb, and having a mysterious history. One day the child heard him say: "Others, Madame, have had their four-and-twenty hours of fever; mine lasted ten years." When Edgar asked what that meant, he was told in a hushed voice, "*the Terror.*" For a whole generation it would appear as if this venerable member of the Mountain party in the Convention of '93 had lived on quietly at Charolles. He had done great things for his country as a commissioner in the army of the Rhine and as the discoverer of General Hoche. The Quinets highly respected him; and now when, in 1838, he came to die, the young poet sat by the bedside of the old Conventionnel, and received as a legacy his memoirs of the Revolution. Grasping Quinet's arm, and gathering all his strength into one last look, he said: "Believe me, the history of our times has yet to be written. Saint-Just and I fired the batteries at Wissembourg. People praised us, but we did not deserve it, for we knew perfectly well that bullets could not touch us." Then the dying man relapsed into silence, and his friend bade him farewell.

It was apparently at Charolles that Quinet wrote his articles on "The Age of Louis XIV.," "Literary Cosmopolitanism," and the "Unity of the Modern Spirit," now included in his "Germany."

Its object was to contend against that view of the age of Louis XIV. which represented it as one apart from all others, having no connection with those that had preceded it, but as being rather a reproduction in modern times of classic antiquity. Quinet argues that it had no more connection with ancient times than St. Peter's at Rome; but that the real sources of its civilisation were the same as those of all the modern peoples. Christianity alone, he contends, made it a totally different thing from the ancient world: its classicality is only a veneer, the spirit of its literature being exactly the same as that which pervades all modern and Christian literature. It differs

from the Middle Age because it combined two worlds, that of scholasticism and modern philosophy,—Thomas Aquinas and Descartes.

Of the absurdly pedantic tradition which those who assume to be authorities of this age would enforce, he says: "You might as well expect to find the first flowers of spring in the drawers of a herbalist, as to recognise the eternal works of the mind in the system of rules and restrictions professedly derived from the age of Louis XIV.

"If anything may be affirmed of the thoughts of this age, it is that they are winged like those of Plato. At the breath of the Cartesian philosophy they rise with an easy effort. Not only are Malebranche, Pascal, and the sad recluses of Port Royal borne to these heights, but you meet people of the world there also. Not only is there an evident superiority in the epoch to the one that followed it; but everything, or nearly everything about it, seems affected by that sublime folly of idealism which in our days is the great reproach levelled at certain foreign schools."

Having thus shown that the apparent isolation of the age of Louis XIV. has no reality, he proceeds to develop the principle of the unity of modern civilisation, and to lay the foundation of a European literature.

Racine, Molière, Shakespeare, Voltaire, Goethe, Corneille, Calderon, he says, are brothers. Let us elevate our theories so as to admit them all, since none of them will lower themselves to meet our notions. The place of these men is the fireside not of a people, but of humanity.

Rising above the rivalries, the enmities, the antipathies of climates, times, places, let us aspire to the spirit universally one which dwells in the inspired works of each people.

Just as a feeling of the order and harmony of Nature has taken possession of Man since he recognised the existence of one spirit present everywhere, in place of the innumerable genii he once supposed to preside over each tree, river, or rock; so from the recognition of each immortal work of humanity we shall rise, sooner or later, to the thought of one same inspiration, one same life universally present and acting in that other universe which is called Art; and the same Providence, that is discovered in the works of dead nature, will show itself in the works of thought. Can God, who is present in the ant's nest, the honeycomb, or the beaver's hut, be absent in the Iliad, Athalie, or Faust? This is not perhaps according to the poetics of De la Harpe or of Blair, but it is assuredly agreeable to that of Aristotle, of Pascal, and of Fénélon.

If the times in which we live have any value, it certainly is

because they will end by putting in full daylight this unity of the modern genius. There is not a single writer of our time who has not, in his own way, contributed to this alliance.

Philosophic, religious; literary discussion is no longer, as in the eighteenth century, confined to the drawing-rooms of Paris; the word flies from people to people; each has a particular task, of which the others are at once conscious. At one extremity the Americans conquer physical nature; at the other end of the chain the East seeks itself as a lost world. And these two extremes being thus separated, as youth and old age, and hence incapable of understanding one another, are united together by the medium of Europe, so that in this great body there is not a fibre to-day that can be broken without all shuddering at the same time.

The French Revolution has made this unity manifest; trade has developed it, poetry consecrated it. Who can tell what effects inventions, types yet unknown in history, this union of all climates, this instantaneous exchange of forms and traditions, and this single soul, bestowed on the human race, is capable of producing.

The only barrier which will, ere long, divide the peoples to any extent, will be language. But if this barrier were effaced, the diversity necessary to unity in order to form an organisation would disappear, and chaos would be imminent. So we ought to recognise a truly social instinct in the efforts recently made to keep each language to its indigenous genius and its own peculiarities. The problem each people has to-day to resolve is, how to express the universal thought without going beyond itself.

How is it that such a new condition does not awaken vast hopes? How is it that we hear lamentations, see marks of depression? How is it we have these signs of old age in the midst of new life? There are many reasons, but the principal causes are the decline of the self-love of the peoples, the division of minds which results from revolutions, that singular folly which continually leads people to depreciate the age.

Some, on the other hand, are so infatuated with the advance of knowledge, that they would have us believe that great poetry or art is henceforth impossible. But ask them what sort of a society they live in, what it will be to-morrow, what will become of the simplest relations of life—the master and the workman, the king and the subject, the father and the child, and they will confess their absolute ignorance. Still more, if you interrogate them on the kind of God they worship, on their soul which converses with yours, on what they hope or fear beyond death; they recognise that in the truth their fathers held, that

there was on these matters a basis of ascertained knowledge but for themselves they no longer know anything about them, and they do not wish to know. Thus the unknown surrounds us and oppresses us more than ever. We need not fear it will ever fail us. Our knowledge increases our ignorance; and the universe now is not less mysterious than in the days of Homer. Who does not feel that the marvellous and the unknown are not only in nature, but, above all, in ourselves? Because the age has got rid of its ancient god, it imagines itself for ever emancipated from the Infinite and its allurements. But to how many idols has it not already bowed down? Where has it not already been led by its imagination? Napoleon, German philosophy, revived Catholicism, Saint-Simonism, and the many other sects, are ever returning proofs of the innumerable illusions of glory and of hope. Since man has substituted himself for God, he has become sad and troublesome to himself. In truth, the government of the universe embarrasses him, and makes him very anxious. This great *parvenu* would do well to abdicate the crown he has usurped, and return to his former condition.

Instead of saying all is finished, let us rather say all is commencing. It would seem as if matter, more intelligent than spirit, is fermenting in order to produce a new world. The situation has some resemblances to times such as those of the invention of the printing-press, of the first use of cannon, and of the mariner's compass. To-day, as then, Humanity plays with terrible forces which it has just discovered; it feels carried to the unknown by powers which at present it neither measures, regulates, nor understands. Oppressed by its own inventions, it prostrates itself before them; Pygmalion once more adores the work of his own hands.

It is thought that idealistic philosophy must necessarily be antagonistic to the extreme development of the industrial world. No, the soul triumphs in what is regarded as its defeat. Far from being disconcerted at the apparent victory, we see in it the assured victory of the Spirit. The age may give itself up to squaring timber, sawing stone, digging the soil; these occupations can never wholly possess it. Whatever may happen, Man here below will always resemble Robinson Crusoe on his lonely island; all the labours of his hands will culminate in his hollowing out a canoe, in order that he may escape from what he feels to be his prison.

In the autumn of 1838, Edgar Quinet had an offer from the University of Strasburg of a professorship.

In 1839 he sustained two theses at Strasburg; one on "Art," and the other on the "Nature and Growth of the most Ancient Indian Poetry." Finally, however, he was nominated to the Faculty of Lyons by M. de Salvandy, and he opened his first course of lectures there in April 1839. This nomination appears to have been made at last in spite of the royal prejudice against Quinet. "A fine choice you have just made!" said Louis Philippe to the minister. "You have named a republican."

Book V.

THE TEACHER.

"Life of the Divine Spirit through the history of the world, Annals of the Eternal incarnated in time, who am I that I should attempt this history? I have often thought that a man, before he dies, owes it to himself to cast a look back on the beliefs of his brethren who have preceded him; however, if I sought only repose, I would put off until my last hour an examination so perilous for the intellect! But what! always adjourn that which is most important! only take pleasure in that which is most ephemeral!. Can we do it? Who can promise me a single day? No one."—*Génie des Religions.*



Edgar Quinet

Edgar Quinet (1830, *at the age of* 27).

To face p. 261.

INTRODUCTORY.

LYONS. 1839.

"The real history of Man is the history of Religion: the wonderful ways by which the different families of the human race advanced towards a truer knowledge and a deeper love of God. This is the foundation that underlies all profane history; it is the light, the soul, and life of history, and without it all history would indeed be profane."—*Max Müller.*

WE now come to the first in that series of great works which Edgar Quinet conceived for the instruction of his young countrymen. No one ever felt more deeply the responsibility of the professor's chair. He knew that he was one of those who had in their hands the ductile clay, out of which the New France was to be made. If that future France was to be something really noble and enduring, the first thing to be done was to see to the foundations upon which it was to rise. Now in Quinet's opinion the foundations of a country were its Religion. "Religion," he said, "is the substance of Humanity," taking the word *substance* in its literal sense as that which stands under or maintains humanity. According to the character of the religion of a country will be the character of all its institutions, of all its arts, of its people. Other reformers had sought to give new life to their countries by revolutionising their institutions; he saw that in the end all these efforts would prove a failure unless the revolution extended to Religion. It was clearly the divorce in France between its religious instincts and its highest aspirations that was the secret of its political instability. Eventually the deepest influence must sway the country, and that influence would

be the religious one. And, as yet, all the religious work of the Revolution was destructive; day by day it pulled away a stone from the foundations of faith.

Another prophetic mind, Mazzini, saw this weak point in the Revolution; and has somewhere said: "It is synthesis, not analysis, the world wants." And again: "The great problem for Europe is the religious problem, to which all others are secondary." The problem is to bring the religious instincts of Christendom into harmony with that enlargement of heart and mind that has resulted from the great thoughts and great events of the last hundred years; and if it were not for superstition on the one hand, and want of faith on the other, its solution would not be difficult. Anyhow, Quinet was so convinced of its importance that henceforth it became the main idea of his life, and these lectures were his first distinct contribution to the Science of Religion, a science which, it is clear, must be thoroughly understood before anything practical can be done.

Grounded as the demand for Religious Reform is on the immense development of the sentiment of humanity during the last hundred years, Edgar Quinet was right in commencing his work at Lyons by a discourse on "The Unity of the Modern Peoples." In referring to the title of his chair he expressed regret at having to use the word *foreign*, since nothing that speaks of the passions, griefs, beliefs of mankind, ought to be so regarded. He denied that the study of foreign literature had a tendency to weaken the national genius. France, he reminded his audience, was only a province of Humanity: the spirit of London, Paris, Berlin, St. Petersburg is in each case provincial. Properly to understand itself, France must pass out of its own limits into communion with the spirit of the whole human race.

Edgar Quinet remained at Lyons until July 1841, when he was appointed Professor of Southern Literature in the College of France. During the years 1839 and

1840, he lectured at Lyons on the vast subject out of which grew the book subsequently published under the title, "Génie des Religions." In this work he considered the great civilisations of antiquity; in a later course, published under the title "Le Christianisme et la Révolution Française," he treated the history of Christendom. The two should be regarded as one work, linked together by the "Examen de la Vie de Jésus."

In the preface to the first edition of the "Génie," he states that the object of the work is "to deduce Political and Civil Society from Religion." In that to the second, referring to both works, "Génie" and "Le Christianisme," he says:—

> "The two together, embracing Religion as the substance of humanity, from the most ancient time until our own, are intended to exhibit political and social Revolutions proceeding from Revolutions accomplished in the conception of the idea of God, and thus to show the history of the Civil world everlastingly reforming itself from its primitive source."

I would here willingly leave the condensation of the "Génie des Religions," offered in this volume, to the reader's own consideration, but it seems to me it will increase his interest to call attention to the main idea upon which the work is founded, an idea as fruitful as it is original.

Edgar Quinet from the first refused to admit the necessity of supernatural agency to explain the problem of man's severance from the rest of the universe and his subsequent progress. When he wrote his Introduction to Herder, though only twenty-one, he ventured to differ from what he then thought the view of his master on this point. He seems to have subsequently found out that he was mistaken in attributing to Herder the idea of a supernatural intervention; and Herder's doctrine on Revelation appears to be the germ of that which Quinet has worked out in these lectures on the Religions of Antiquity. The whole idea there developed could not

be better expressed than it has been by Wordsworth in his preface to "The Excursion":—

> "How exquisitely the individual Mind
> (And the progressive powers perhaps no less
> Of the whole species) to the external World
> Is fitted: and how exquisitely, too—
> Theme this but little heard of among men—
> The external World is fitted to the Mind
> And the creation (by no lower name
> Can it be called) which they with blended might
> Accomplish [1] ——"

This is exactly the doctrine of Herder and Quinet; only, instead of calling the combined work of Nature and the Individual Mind, "Creation," Quinet calls it "Revelation." He, as Wordsworth, thinks that the Individual Mind is the correlative of Nature, so that to every manifestation of the outer universe there is a correspondence in the Human Mind. When that correspondence is quickened, a sense of some Power terrible or adorable is evoked, and the awakening of such a sense is strictly a revelation. This idea of some unseen Power behind the manifestation that has thus aroused the sentiment of fear or of adoration, will grow into a Religion as mind after mind is affected by it. Men will not only regulate their lives with reference to it, but also their social relations; a compact society will be built upon it, through which it will permeate as the principle of life in a human frame. But as the body passes through every stage until it reaches that of disease and death, so it is with the Religions thus formed and the Societies built upon them.

Meanwhile, the fate of Humanity no more rests on one revelation than its existence on this earth is bound up in one individual or race, and each of its manifestations finds a correspondence in some individual mind, which becomes its interpreter. So successively, or, it

[1] "Essai sur les Œuvres de Herder," Œuvres Complètes, in-18, tome ii. p. 402.

may be, simultaneously, the various aspects of Nature originated the various religions of antiquity.

Each of these religions became the basis of a society, of a civilisation; and it is a leading object in this work to show how entirely each of the civilisations was the offspring of a religious dogma. According, then, to Edgar Quinet, social and political institutions, law, philosophy, poetry, painting, the drama—everything, in fact, that Humanity produces, form themselves according to its religious ideas, and develop or change as they develop or change. A new earth is always the result of a new heaven.

"Through all Quinet's studies upon religion nothing is more observable than his power of soft and sure penetration, like that of serene light, through the letter to the spirit, from the form to that which the form indeed signifies. His own altogether genuine spiritual nature has a natural affinity for spiritual truth; it seems as if he could go wrong only by denying part of himself. For him the religions of the past do not consist of idle mythologies and insignificant ceremonial; they are quick and moving thoughts of men worshipping in spirit and in truth. He arrives at his results less by an application to the past of the modern intellect and erudition, than by seeking within himself, and finding there the *fond*, still pressing, and not lifeless in each of us, of the ancient faiths."[1]

Yet it must not be supposed that Quinet was other than intimately acquainted with all the literature of the subject. His conversations with Creuzer, his general knowledge of Hegel's philosophy, his sympathetic appreciation of Champollion, E. Burnouf, O. Müller, should be borne in mind.

Naturally there will be details in the argument which will need to be corrected by the researches of later workers, but this does not affect the real force of the work, which lies now, as it always did, in an intuition of the truth of things, in that prophetic insight with which Edgar Quinet was undoubtedly gifted, and which is the only explanation of the light that he threw upon every subject he took in hand.

[1] "Edgar Quinet," by Edward Dowden. "Fortnightly Review," Feb. 1, 1871.

THE GENIUS OF THE ANCIENT RELIGIONS.

I.

Of Revelation by means of Nature.

Sec. 1.—*The Spiritual Genesis.*

Nature appears ever the same, subject to immutable laws. Man is the only being in the universe that cannot rest as it began; he is ever moving forward, ever disquieting himself, ever destroying his own creations. Filled with an intense desire for something that he can never obtain, man is for ever pursuing the infinite, changing his religions, his social forms, but never this same insatiable desire. Let him but for a moment lose moral liberty, and this hunger after the infinite and life would very soon cease; there would be an end to civil history; human existence could be summed up in a chapter of natural history.

Before Man came into the world, Nature herself passed through many revolutions. When at last he arrived, Nature sank again into her ancient immobility, and the power of transformation took up its abode in the heart and conscience of man. Then the formative spirit recommences to work, and the human bosom is henceforth the scene of a new creation, in which the chaos, the profound night, the tempests, and the struggles which tore the outer world, are all reproduced. The breath of the spirit passing over the abyss of intelligence, irradiates with light the dark night of thought. New beings begin to appear,—societies, states; in these states, gods; then institutions, codes of law, works of art. The same power that called the animals by their names, evokes from age to age races and empires; the organised universe no longer produces new forms, animal or vegetable, but social forms, diverse in character, give birth one to the other in an indefinite succession. To the genesis of matter succeeds the genesis of intelligence.

To trace the phases of this spiritual genesis, to show how the civilisations link themselves together, will be the purpose of this book; but to do this it will be necessary to set aside everything in those societies which has been evanescent, in order that we may lay hold, with a firm grasp, of that which has been the principle of their life. And that principle we shall find in something deeper than their arts or literature, their philosophical systems or civil institutions—in an element closely and inseparably connected with the very idea of social life. The spirit eternally present, of which the very substance of each of these peoples has been formed, what could it have been if not

Religion? since from it has sprung, as by a necessary consequence, their political institutions, their arts, poetry, and philosophy, and, to a certain extent, the very course of events. To know a people, we must know its gods. If we know the dogma of a society, we know why and how it lives; we possess its secret; it can no longer deceive us, either by its laughter or its tears; we are not only able to read its thoughts on its brow, but those that God has inscribed on the depth of its spirit.

If we attempt to study the states that have had a place in history, we shall see each of them rising on a particular dogma as a statue on its base. Far from mocking at these bygone faiths, let us ask if their empty sanctuaries do not still contain an echo of the truth; at any rate, let us note how their political history has been related to the dogmas hidden under their symbols.

SEC. 2.—*The Earth considered as the first Temple.*

An all-powerful hand modelled the earth, figuring its continents, its rivers, its seas, its mountains. Into the mould thus prepared the races of men were thrown, and its varied forms determined the nature of their societies. It results from this, that each spot in Nature, each moment of duration having its own spirit, represents the Deity under some particular form; from each form of the world rises a revelation, from each revelation a society, from each society a voice in the universal choir; there is no wandering point in space or time which does not figure something in the ever increasing revelation of the Eternal. Creation at first separated from its author tends more and more to reattach itself to him by the ties of the Spirit; and the earth, in fact, brings forth its God in the travail of the ages.

SEC. 3.—*The Filiation of the Human Race.*

On the scene thus prepared the actors appear: the noise of tribes, nations, states, fill the silent valleys of the new-born world. Each race bears in its features, in its heart, in its rough thoughts, the ineffaceable stamp of a particular seal, as if it had already contracted habits of body and mind in the bosom of an anterior world.

Who has marked with these indestructible types the forehead of the human race? Whence come these inclinations, these vocations, these determinate missions, which no revolution can destroy? It is the secret of the workshop of Providence; for if the greater part of the people contract resemblances with the places which they inhabit, there are others who seem foreigners in their own country. It is rare that a people flourishes where

it was born; its tomb is nearly always far from its cradle. When a people is named for the first time in history, it already has a distinct form, a character of its own, ineffaceable habits of mind, ancient traditions, a sacred language, the echo of an immemorial religion, that is to say, the miracle of civil organisation.

This education has chiefly taken place in its migrations, since there is not a tribe that has not wandered long over the earth before fixing itself in the place where its native genius was to take root. Are the traces of all these wanderings effaced, or, at least, is the genealogy of the human races for ever lost? Far from it; this genealogy has just been recovered. Monuments more sure than milestones mark from age to age, not only the filiation, the descent, the degree of the relationship of the peoples, but also their itinerary in a time in which they had no idea of leaving any witnesses behind them. These monuments are the human tongues; this discovery is that of the affiliation of the idioms of the East with those of the West.

Thus it has become evident that the people who are to-day the most strange one to the other, lived originally in the closest relations; that they composed at first one great family, drawing its social life from the same source. Interpret as you will the relationship of these idioms, you are always led back to the necessity of a central stock, from whence spring out the branches of that living tree which is called history.

SEC. 4.—*Of the Religious Institution of Society.*

How was social order born of a shapeless crowd? According to the men of the last century, man in a condition profoundly abject, raised himself by degrees to some rough notions of the arts, and of industry, from whence he has crawled little by little to the threshold of social life. Rousseau, in his discourse on the inequality of conditions, has recapitulated the opinions of his epoch. His primitive men are great reasoners; sadly and regularly they proceed from deduction to deduction, but so slowly that between each of their reasonings thousands of years elapse. Imagination, poetry, religion, sacred instincts, those sentiments which invade the soul of man from the moment of his appearance on earth, are precisely those which Rousseau counts for nothing.

No, the civil world has not commenced with the fish-hook, nor the stone axe, nor the quiver and arrow of the savage; these things separate rather than draw together. It was born in that day when, in any manner whatsoever, the thought of God sprang up in the mind of a man who was able to announce

it, to reveal it to and impose it on his brethren. A common life has commenced between minds who have together recognised, adored one same Spirit. Individuals, until then scattered, have been united in one same thought, in Moral Order; a shelter, a refuge, a common dwelling-place has been found. Religious unity founds political unity, and from the idea of God has gone out society fully alive.

What do we find at the beginning of every history but the memory of a vast inspiration, as of some great start which made the heart of the people throb? Everywhere the memory of elect men—poets, prophets, seers, priests—who have taught the various races of men and made them their followers, instructing them from the very beginning to hold themselves erect in the face of the universe.

Nature was the great book from whence these masters of the human race drew their inspiration. They listened to all the voices of heaven and earth as the last echo of the word of the Genesis. And the people were ravished to find that same creation still going on in themselves. The first rays of the sun penetrating to the bottom of the hearts of these children of the clay, made spiritual light burst forth. The breath of the Eternal, agitating the waters and passing over the lips of man, becomes speech, language, poetry. All is ordered, all is established on the model of the universe. The first founders of empires borrow their science from the sacred politics which regulate the constellations over their heads.

The idea of God revealed by the organ of the Universe is the base which history everywhere assigns to the edifice of civil society. And this idea, expressed, disfigured, restored, changed into all forms, is the permanent cause, the very substance of society and history. A people counts for something when it rises to this thought; it then takes rank in the citizenship of humanity. The commencement of every nation is the discovery of its God.

SEC. 5.—*The Migrations of the Human Races in their Relations with the History of the Religions.*

Without inquiring if the society born of this first revelation had such a unity that we may regard it as a sort of primitive communion of the human race, it is certain that everywhere there subsists the tradition of an original fraternity. But the moment comes when the instincts of the various peoples discover themselves; the first mysterious constitution is dissolved, the human races separate, polytheism is born, and with it plurality of nations, states, empires, tongues. The edifice of Nature

breaks down, that of Art commences. This fall of the first religious and civil unity is symbolised by the story of the tower of Babel. After having furrowed the valleys, how has Providence scattered the seed over the earth? To follow the human wheat is to come upon the track of the Divine Labourer.

All traditions point to three races, a division which both the Bible and modern science confirms. Two peoples appear first in history—the Hindoos and the Persians: the one contemplative, the other active. The Hindoos descend into the bed of the Indus and the Ganges, where, concealed from the rest of the world by the Himalayas, they half slumber amongst the water-flowers, as Brahma by the fall of the Ganges. The Persians, impelled by their struggling god Ahriman, push on through Western Asia into Europe. At last, arrived at the defiles of the Caucasus, this race of Japhet enter the Western World, under different names, divided as their dogmas, often armed against themselves; from them go out the Celtic and German families.

Near to this race dwells that of Shem, uniting, beyond all others, the genius of Religion and that of Industry. It will live under the tent of Abraham and on the ships of Tyre. The desert and the sea, these two visible figures of the infinite, belong to it almost exclusively; it carries in its bosom the Jehovah and the Christ.

Lastly, more to the west is the race of Ham. Seeing God in the animal creation, it will become slave in body as in mind. From the centre of India a sacerdotal colony brings to this race the principle of social life. Following the course of the Nile, the peoples surge around this migration, ever increasing it with affluents from the tribes of Arabia and Nubia. Thus the gods of Egypt collect and accumulate as the mud of the Delta.

The struggles of these three actors, Assyrians, Persians, Egyptians, fill the scene. The conquerors impose themselves on the conquered; the struggles of men of different colours result in the establishment of caste, an institution consecrated by the existence of gods, tawny, black, white, olive-coloured; a celestial hierarchy, subordinate one to the other.

The second epoch of migrations commences. The populations of Asia overflow. After the invasion of, and expulsion from Egypt of the shepherd people, there comes a more solemn migration. Moses leads the Hebrew people out of Egypt, through the wilderness into Canaan. As they emerge from the waters of the Red Sea the people chant their hymn of praise: "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." It is its first cry in coming into the world; for this moment marks the birth of

the Hebrew people, until then held in slavery. This hymn of thanksgiving is the keynote of all its poetry. It is the cry of humanity coming out for the first time from the house of bondage, from the land of castes, from the temple of polytheism and of matter. Echoed from age to age, it resounds to-day in all the churches of Christianity, where it recalls, not only the emancipation of a people, but the emancipation of the world; not only the migration out of Egypt, but the migration of the soul from amidst the senses into the promised land of Eternity. The entire society of the Hebrews is founded on the memory of that migration, of which their principal institution, the Passover, is a solemn representation.

The wanderers become sedentary, the shepherds become husbandmen; they quit the desert to live in cities. The wandering tabernacle of Jehovah is fixed; he is not only the One God, but the Immutable God; he whose foundations will never pass away, will convert the world to his unity as well as to his immutability; he possesses a temple, and the epoch of its construction becomes itself a fundamental era in the history of the Hebrews.

About the time when Moses conducted the Hebrews into Judæa, other migrations took place which had very different consequences. The Phenicians entered Attica, the Egyptians the Argolide. When these emigrations by sea were finished, others commenced; various races pressing through the valleys of the Taurus to reach Greece. Others come from the mouths of the Danube into Thrace and Thessaly, all tending towards Southern Greece, reaching at last even the plain of Attica. Each valley of the Olympian range is filled by a particular tribe, who bring their own god. The people who drive all the others before them are the Dorians, the most serious, the strongest, the noblest of all. They close the march of the invaders as the Normans concluded the invasions of the Middle Age.

Thus the two great emigrations of the Hebrews and the Hellenes took place about the same time, but how different their character and results. The most striking vestiges of both are to be discovered in Religion. Each society personifies itself in its God, attributing to him all the facts of its collective life; it clothes him with its whole past. Under Jehovah is all Israel, as under Hercules is the whole race of the Dorians.

Two things result from the varied character of the emigrations into Greece: first, that Asia and the Oriental dogma soon appear under Western forms; second, a prodigious variety of beliefs, traditions, and religious customs. The Oriental religions concentrate themselves in the Hellenic mythology.

Moreover, the peoples, in their migrations, consecrate to their

national god the places where they rest. The way of the Dorians is thus marked by sanctuaries and stations of Apollo; that of the Arcadians by vestiges of Hermes; that of the Ionians by the trace of Neptune; while the wandering Pelasgians, without property or distinct country, leave behind by chance their shapeless gods of unhewn stone, images of a people who have not yet risen to the sentiments of personality and of social organisation.

These migrations do not stop at Greece. The Pelasgians, fleeing before the peoples who descend from the north of Thrace, arrive in Tuscany. The Etruscans, a Caucasian people, preceded by the augury of the woodpecker, establish themselves between the Arno, the Apennines, and the Tiber. Other emigrations, Dorian or Ionian, follow, but keep within their own limits. Italy, Greek on the surface, is never so in heart. Its populations, instead of forming themselves into states, gather into cities.

Rome becomes the crown of the antique world, because in her all its varied races meet, enter into alliance, become one before the law. All their gods enter into her Pantheon, forming one communion, a sort of Pagan Catholicism. Profane antiquity concluded in Rome, it could go no farther.

So closes the second day of the civil world. The states born of these new migrations are Jerusalem, Sparta, Athens, Rome. Quicker to arrive at maturity than Assyria, Persia, Egypt, they are quicker to die, but they live a nobler life.

During the whole of the Greek and Roman era the Celts were insinuating themselves into Europe, and, gradually increasing, suddenly appeared in Italy and in Rome. That they did not become the inheritors of the Roman power was due not only to their inability to sustain the repeated shocks of the struggle, but to the capitulation of their gods, who, introduced into the Capitol, lost their native originality, independence, and sovereignty. Beholding their gods enchained in the Latin Pantheon, the Celtic peoples are held in bondage to Rome by the religious tie. The Celts had the instinct of great enterprises, but they never executed them. They have only left behind them some scattered remnants of the race, of their languages; a phantom King Arthur, a vague echo of Ossian, the Celtic Jeremiah; uncertain gods, none of whom could discrown the Greek and Roman Jupiter. None can reign except on condition of sooner or later making his god reign.

From the time of the wars against Mithridates, other migrations began to take place from the frontiers of Media; and doubtless these wandering races would have followed the path of those that preceded them, had they obeyed the direction of Nature.

But the Roman power was still erect; so, turning far from the centre of civilisation, they entered the valley of the Volga and sought a refuge in Scandinavia. Here their Oriental genius began to transform itself, and they became a terrible people; reformers who, in order to change the civil world, commence by destroying it. It is clear their dark and sanguinary faith will never be mixed with the honeyed faith of Olympus. Odin can never become the slave of Jupiter. He can never seat himself tranquilly in the tolerant circle of the Roman Pantheon. If he submits, it must be to a god not only superior to all the others, but newer and more jealous.

II.

Of Tradition.

Sec. 1.—*How Oriental Tradition has been lost and recovered.*

The most western book of the Orient, the Bible, hardly mentions Upper Asia. The Hindoos and the Hebrews were hidden from each other. The people of Moses, believing themselves the children of the Most High, had little reason for seeking any other genealogy.

On the other hand, the Greeks, in their self-admiration, thought that they had themselves originated the ideas upon which their religion was founded. Thus both these great teachers of the human race lost the tradition of the East.

The universal tradition was recovered for a moment in the schools of Alexandria, and Christianity in its earliest days sealed the second alliance between the East and the West.

But it was soon broken again by the ascetic spirit of the Middle Ages. Marco Polo reopened the lost continent of India two centuries before the discovery of America, but the relations between the East and the West were never re-established until trade and manufactures again raised the Senses and Nature to the position preceding ages had refused them. The Middle Age finished on the day in which the Orient, with all the glories of visible nature, was restored to Europe by the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope. To the worship of grief succeeded the worship of industry. The West adhered once again to the East, and a new era commenced.

It was reserved, however, to the eighteenth century to rediscover the traditions of Asia. Anquetil-Duperron, and then Sir William Jones, opened up the way. What Lascaris and the refugees of Byzantium did for the Greek renaissance these men did for the Oriental. And now all that the past contains

of religion, all the sacred elements of tradition, are suddenly gathering themselves together into a divine chaos, to give, as it would seem, a new form to Humanity. What is taking place in science is more apparent in civil and political life. Facts as well as ideas, interests as well as tradition, show Europe one with Asia; while the East itself, emerging from its immutability, learns modern methods.

What new order will be evolved from this fusion of the two worlds? At the time that the Old Testament is being augmented by so many pages found in the Bibles of India and Persia, will not the New develop itself, and unveil more and more the spirit buried in the letter? If, in the sixteenth century, the Greek and Roman renaissance closed the Middle Age and gave the world a form, a new word; if it burst forth at the same time as the religious reformation, are we not beholding, in our own day, the Oriental renaissance already corresponding in like manner to a new reformation of the religious and civil world?

SEC. 2.—*The Oriental Renaissance.*

In the re-establishment of the tradition of Upper Asia, the spirit of commerce, of discovery, of travel, has been aided by that of the imagination. As the Portuguese, by the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope, were the first to restore Asia to Europe, so were they the first to crown by the imagination the alliance commerce was to renew. This work achieved, they fall back in silence. As Portugal has had but one moment of splendour, so also she has had but one poet, one book. That poet was Camoens, that book the Lusiad. Throughout the poem you find a soul as profound as the ocean, and as the ocean it unites two shores. It is an epic without battles, without sieges, entirely pacific, concerning itself only with the eternal combat between Man and Nature, celebrating the heroic age of commerce, a terrible Odyssey among the early factories of the East Indies.

Some years after Anquetil-Duperron, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre wandered on the same shores. With him a new soul seemed to insinuate itself into the eighteenth century. From his voyage in the seas of Camoens he brought home with him two personages born under that foreign sky—Paul and Virginia. How like is Virginia to the female figures of sacred Hindoo poetry; the same gentleness, the same instincts, the same reverence for plants, the same tenderness for the whole of living nature; only all is rendered more touching by Christianity. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre gives you the impression of a Christian Brahmin.

Napoleon, one of his admirers, was himself Asiatic in type of his heroism. He has caused the mind and soul of Asia to take possession of France. When he said, "You have fallen from the Alps as a torrent," or, "I am the god of armies," he spoke like a Western Mahomet.

England has concurred in this same Oriental renaissance, first by its scientific men—its Joneses, Wilsons, Colebrookes—and then by its poets. It would be easy to show this in the Lake school, and in the pantheist Shelley, by merely citing the titles of their works, but it is most prominent in Byron. His sojourn of nearly two years in the Morea and Constantinople became a new link between Europe and Asia; the interest of the alliance being, that while his forms and his colouring are Eastern, the soul of his poems is Western.

SEC. 3.—*Continuation.*

Germany shows the influence of the Oriental genius in the very constitution of its language, which seems drawn directly from Oriental sources. Its ancient poems are nearly all Oriental in thought. Pantheism, which Christianity has only half conquered, has been ever ready to wake up in the German mind, and is in our time the vital principle in German poetry and philosophy.

The Germans are so possessed by the Oriental spirit that, although their vessels never plough Eastern seas, they sit at home and dream like Orientals, and can give the impression of the East even if they have not been there. Another source of Oriental influence upon Germany is that it partly owes its modern language to the translation of the Scriptures. The Reformation still further helped this influence by bringing into more general reading the Old Testament. And resting as it did on the examination of the Scriptures, it led to that Biblical criticism which has given rise in Germany to such a profound study of Oriental ideas and religions. The effect of this is nowhere more manifest than in Herder's book on the Genius of Hebrew Poetry. His intelligence seems to have been bathed in the sunlight of Sinai. He explains, like Joseph in the Court of Pharaoh, the dreams of the old East; for it is by a sort of divination as much as by learning that Herder thus became the exponent of the Asiatic genius.

What Herder attempted by criticism, Goethe realised in poetry. He takes for his themes Indian legends; at other times he inspires himself with Islamism. In his poem called "Divan," he seems neither European nor Christian, but a veritable

Mohammedan. Of that contrast, so pathetic in the English writers, there is not the least trace in the German spirit. You would say it belonged to a society as tranquil and as changeless as that of Asia. There are other German writers upon whom this influence seems to lie like a bondage,—Goerres, for instance, and again, Ruckert. The poetry of the latter reproduces the impression of those dialogues of the pearls and precious stones on the shores of the ocean, or of the sun and the rose, or of the murmur of gathered flowers in Ispahan. And this poetry has become popular on the Rhine, as if it stirred the heart of Germany with the memory of a second country.

If the question is asked, why the Germany of our days has alone avoided the literature of despair? we reply, the difference arises from this, that Germany has remained Oriental in her scepticism. Instead of that pyrrhonism of Greek and Roman society, that absolute scepticism of Lucian, Lucretius, and Voltaire, the German does not go so far as to deny Being itself. Pantheism has preserved him from atheism. He has never found himself for a moment in the presence of the Nothing; and if he falls conquered in the struggle with the Infinite, it is with the feelings of Jacob overthrown by the archangel, rather than that of the soul who gives all up to the worm or to the atom of the Epicureans.[1]

This scepticism is personified in Faust, which has nothing in common with the philosophy of Montaigne or of Voltaire. Strange sceptic, devoured with a thirst to know all, to find the principle of life, the light of lights. He falls at last under a doctrine which is that of Oriental antiquity rather than that of the eighteenth century. Can he become as the gods? This is not the malady of the encyclopedists. It is more like the pride of the first man under the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The scepticism of the East and the West struggle together in the double blasphemy of Faust and Mephistopheles.

It is in reality in philosophy and the general habit of thought that the spirit and tradition of the East seems to revive to-day. Compare German metaphysics with those of India, and it would require an effort to say where they differ. At the same time that Asia penetrates into the poetry and into the philosophy of the West, she insinuates herself into its doctrines; and finally, metaphysics seal the alliance of the two worlds. The pantheism of the East transformed by Germany, corresponds to the Oriental renaissance as the Idealism of Plato, corrected by Descartes, crowned in the seventeenth century the Greek and Latin renaissance.

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1 The "Génie des Religions" was first published in 1841.

SEC. 4.—*How the Religions of Antiquity have been regarded.*

Progress, the life of all history, seems wanting to the religions, since the greater part, instead of confirming, continuing those that have gone before, appear made to destroy them. The gods of one religion become the demons of the next.

Piety and Incredulity have both alike misconceived profane tradition. The first Christians, meeting only with a superannuated paganism, judged of its whole past by the ruin. This whited sepulchre filled them with horror.

For opposite reasons the encyclopedists confirmed this condemnation. Volney in his "Ruins" sums up the opinion of both the schools of Voltaire and Rousseau, when he says: Men have all been the prey or the instrument of fraud; the religions are only lies; the united ages have only given birth to tyranny, distress, blindness; in this immense concourse of peoples, empires, intelligent creatures, all have been deceivers or deceived. The men of the Revolution believed that they alone had the truth, and Volney, on his private authority, made himself its high priest.

To the French encyclopedists succeeded that German school which attempted to rehabilitate Paganism by bringing together doctrines from all religions and every school. The pantheism of Schelling marks the commencement of the restoration of this school, while the work of Goerres represents it as distinctly as that of Volney does the opposite doctrine.

This is the way men have regarded the religions of Antiquity when they have looked at them in a serious spirit; otherwise they have treated the gods as mere metaphors, writing mythologies for the amusement of children. Historians who thus neglect the religious beliefs of the age they pretend to represent, have merely shown its body; we seek to know its soul.

Of course it is easy to solve every question about Paganism by turning away one's eyes in horror. The first Christian panegyrists thought it enough to institute a sort of lawsuit between the Gospel and Paganism. The judgment having long been delivered, we may now without danger do justice to the fallen religions, and consider them as the Old Testament of the profane world, true preparations to draw men to the new law. All prophecy is not shut up in Jerusalem. The same spirit which shines forth in the visions of Moses, is struggling, endeavouring, stammering beneath the visions of the Gentiles. In polytheism, man hungry for God, after having divided him, seeks him in every object in Nature. Man looks with curiosity at the universe, and finding there only scattered members, his frenzy

increases. With a sort of fury he pursues his invisible prey; he overturns the temple to reach the god. Later on he will search his own intellect. He will heap around himself his own ruins, putting his last hope in finding this lost unity under their ashes, that great undivided all of which he has broken the alliance. Such is the progress hidden under the apparent madness of the ancient religions.

Is it to be believed that societies which have existed for thousands of years had nothing at their root but a corroding worm? Would the eternal principle of good arise nowhere? No! it was not so, it could not be. A ray of the Eternal Truth shot through some air-hole of the most monstrous of these temples, and that ray, however broken and feeble, sufficed to give to these scattered cities, to these societies formed of inimical races, a granite strength for perhaps twenty centuries.

SEC. 5.—*Religious Revolutions in their relations to Social Revolutions.*

The heavens have their history as well as the earth, and a change in divine dynasties implies a revolution in human ideas. Moreover, the gods often alter in their spirit and nature without any alteration in their names or appearance. To search out the variations of Paganism would be to discover the chief cause of the variations in the social life of antiquity.

Under differences of ritual, the principal religions of the East really held the same dogma. They all worshipped the life of the universe under different emblems. Similarity in dogma produces similarity in political constitution. All being God, God possessed all: the king as his representative was the only proprietor in the country; mankind at large had only the usufruct of the soil.

The gods of Greece were originally the same as those of the East, but by degrees their symbols came to be understood in an entirely new sense. From adoring the external world the Greeks reached the point of adoring Humanity. Man by an effort of thought rose into the supreme region; his will became his law, heroism his dogma. The deification of Man had its correlation in the government of Humanity by itself or by consecrated races. The theocracy was replaced by the republic, and Athens and Sparta sprung out fully armed like Minerva from the forehead of the deified human race.

Then Paganism underwent a third revolution. The gods represented neither Nature nor Humanity; they were found to be simply ancient kings deified. The facility with which this

doctrine spread shows how extinct were the old beliefs. Three centuries before the advent of Christianity, Paganism had ceased to live. Rome unreservedly adopted the doctrine of Euhemerus, and the idea of despotism raised to a heavenly throne was the sanction of despotism on an earthly one. The worship of the Cæsar became the religion of the Roman world. When Nero became god, Paganism had reached its lowest level.

Nevertheless, in this decay of religious institutions man gained much. To divine right succeeded private right; to the priest, the legist. The proprietor who in the East was Brahma or Osiris, was in the Roman Empire the father of the family, the individual. Man, delivered from his gods, arrogated to himself, by means of the stoic doctrine, absolute independence in the moral world; by the civil law full sovereignty over things. This is the spirit of the Roman law.

The first effect of Christianity was by the property of the Church to re-establish the idea of a sacred domain. The earth once more became holy ground; the King of kings was believed to have given it to the prince, who in his turn gave it to his vassal, and this hierarchical sentiment mingling with a dependence on the Infinite, gave its sanction to the system of fiefs, a system which can never be fully explained, unless you begin by thus reattaching revolutions in the law of property to revolutions in religious law.

Finally, Paganism made one last desperate effort to struggle with the youth, the spirituality, the purity of the new word. To save the old religion the philosophers lent it their doctrines, rehabilitated it in Platonism, and called from the East divinities who had not lost their prestige. But though Mithra, the Persian god of light, bore all the new titles—the purifier, the redeemer, the mediator—he paled before the invisible light of the Christ.

Such were the principal variations of Paganism: Apotheosis of Nature in the East; Apotheosis of Humanity in Greece; Apotheosis of the City in Rome; Apotheosis of Philosophy in Alexandria.

Every way had been tried, minds were exhausted; after so many efforts nothing was reached but an abstraction; Man must die or renew himself in the Eternal. The human race, tired out, disgusted with itself, did as the beloved disciple; it bent its head and rested on the bosom of the Christ.

SEC. 6.—*Religious Revolutions in their relations with the History of Art.*

The object of all art is to represent infinite beauty by forms, to seize the immutable in the ephemeral, to embrace eternity in

time, to paint the invisible by the visible. For Art to exist there was no need of man. The Eternal was the first poet as well as the first painter. Neither Nature nor Art are copies of each other, since both are derived from the same divine original. No art servilely produces a part of the exterior world. Its ideal is the beautiful in itself, the true above all. Therefore the artists who are really sovereign and free are those who, the better to rival Nature, imitate not only her forms, but her creative process and her intelligence. The artist has two worlds to rule, the real and the ideal; he may not destroy the one by the other, or resolve the one by the other. He must allow them equally to subsist, and must make harmony come out of their apparent contradictions. Thus every fine work is truly moral, because it expresses the harmony of the world and its author. It is an epitome of the universal order.

It follows, therefore, that the arts, instead of being objects of caprice and fancy, have more reality than any other occupations in the world. Nothing can be more real than the eternal, the immortal. Man produces with his hands works that ages will not efface; he dies, and leaves behind him a book, a statue, a painting, which race after race of men will preserve and admire. Why this immutability, if it is not that amongst all the ephemeral thoughts of his time the artist attaches himself to an imperishable idea? Ancient Greece has long ago been broken to pieces, the statue of *Niobe* still stands; the Roman Empire with its amphitheatres are gone for ever, the dying Gladiator still survives.

While asserting that the aim of Art is supreme beauty, we must admit that the same ideal rises before all Humanity. Otherwise how could we explain the fact that while we revolt from the doctrines of paganism we are subjugated by its works? We pity its divinities, we are ravished by its temples; contradictions all the more surprising when we remember that the artists of the Middle Ages, the most pious, the most credulous, the most Christian of men, so far from feeling repugnance for these pagan images, made them objects of assiduous study. Without doubt they found in these exquisite forms of antiquity wandering rays of that eternal beauty which they themselves pursued in the light of Revelation.

If all the artists of Humanity tend to the same end, this alliance is especially evident in those who belong to the same order of civilisation. Whatever the difference in the instrument or methods of execution, all attach themselves to the imitation of the same model. The ideal of artists is not an abstraction born in the philosophical schools. What Art corrects, embellishes or perverts, is a living dogma, a ray of the universal revelation,

an object of faith, a tradition delivered by the elders; in a word, worship, the national religion, this is the visible form of this invisible model.

Religion is the ideal which reigns over a whole civilisation, giving to all its arts the same family air, so that if one alone among them is known it would be possible to restore all the others. To know, then, how many epochs divide the history of the arts, we should commence by discovering how many epochs there have been in the history of worships. So often as men have changed the figure under which they represent to themselves the thought of God, so often have they changed their ideal in works of imitation. On this principle the same variations we have recognised in the religions will serve, not only to mark the revolutions in the arts, but to determine the nature of each of them.

Art, in realising the palpable forms of the idea of God, such as it is conceived by the peoples as imposed by tradition, inevitably alters and transforms it. Born in the bosom of a positive religion, Art aspires to the absolute religion, growing at the expense of tradition; ever inclining to heresy, it tends to destroy its own cradle.

The first epoch of the religions, the worship of the God-Universe, is necessarily distinguished by that art which models itself on nature rather on man—Architecture. This art, moreover, is in harmony with the spirit of a society formed in castes. Its monuments are often the work of continued generations; no single man leaves his stamp upon them.

In the second Religious revolution Humanity adores itself. Evidently Sculpture is the art that accords best with such a religion. And being the visible apotheosis of man, the sculpture of Greece necessarily sought to render its model divine.

Among the Romans, religion being the same in some respects as among the Greeks, Art remained the same in appearance, only it declined as the ideal had declined. The religion of the city being substituted for that of Humanity, Roman art displayed its excellence more in gates, roads, triumphal arches, and columns, than in statues and temples.

With Christianity a new religious revolution is accomplished, which manifestly appears in the arts; one might almost say a new art comes into existence. Man is no longer placed on a pedestal as a god, superior to the whole visible universe. He is no longer thought of abstractedly, but as an individual man, torn by all the agitations of this earthly life. Accordingly he is represented in a particular place at a particular time, surrounded by all that serves to fix his individual character. The divine and human personality, after having been consecrated

by Christianity, has thus founded among moderns the reign of painting.

Moreover, Christianity, if it has not created, has at least revealed the genius of Music, the most spiritual of all the arts. And music is the only art which Protestantism has developed and encouraged. Its epoch of perfection synchronises with the reign of philosophy rather than that of faith. Mozart and Beethoven are the contemporaries of Kant and Hegel.

Above all the arts rises poetry, which to a certain extent embraces them all. And not only has poetry relations with every other art, but in its different kinds it has analogies with architecture, sculpture, and painting.

Lyric poetry belongs most of all to ages in which God is everything, man nothing. It belongs especially to the temple and the cathedral; it accords with religious architecture. Its stanzas rise like sacred columns. Where theocracy has been wanting, as in Rome, lyric poetry has been artificial or has not appeared.

Epic poetry, like statuary, deifies its heroes. It dwells especially in memories, and appears at epochs fruitful in family traditions. Such times are distinguished by the aristocratic spirit. The heroic epic has been the poem of the military caste among the Hindoos, of the Greeks, and of Christian feudalism.

Dramatic poetry is, on the contrary, allied to democracy; it belongs most of all to ages when humanity is the great thought, when the common people have had an existence. In modern times it broke out in the equality of the Church; the mystery plays were first performed in the cathedrals. But during the Middle Ages there was no true drama; it was not until the emancipation of the people that it arrived at perfection. If it has alliance with any of the arts, it is with painting. Painting is a mute drama, as dramatic poetry is a living painting.

III.

The Religions of Upper Asia.

Sec. 1.—*Revelation by Light—The Vedas—The Religion of the Patriarchs.*

The Vedas being the expression of the most ancient of all societies, we are able in them to go back to the earliest origin of the Religions of Antiquity.

These hymns belong to the simplest age of which tradition

gives any idea; before there was any material body or visible government, when there were only tribes; chiefs surrounded by their flocks, seeking on the Indian Alps new pastures, possessing no other wealth than what their waggons could carry, burning the virgin forests to make a way or prepare a dwelling; wanderers, marking each resting-place by a hymn or a sacred stone, fighting for pasture grounds or in defence of their flocks, which to them were the centre and source of all life, prayer, industry, poetry, beliefs. Is not this just the idea that we form of the lives of the patriarchs wandering with the sacrificial fire on the heights of Mesopotamia?

What in this primitive society was the nature of the first revelation?

We must go to the East fully to realise how the Dawn strikes, envelops, inundates all things. If in our climate no one can behold this daily wonder with indifference, what must have been the effect of the first daybreak upon the first man? Would not that first ray, revealing the universe in all its purity, be to him the messenger of the Eternal, coming to search his heart and to cure its evil? In that moment tradition, the memory of conversation between God and man, was born.

So in these Indian hymns you feel the visible dawn awaking, exciting the dawn of thought, and this first delight in the apparition of the universe becoming the foundation and soul of the first worship. Every incident of daybreak, its preceding darkness, its twilight, its rose-coloured moments, its agitations and fluctuations, all are sung under innumerable forms, until the entire God himself darts out with the devouring look of the Asiatic Sun.

Indra resembles Jehovah in his superiority to creation. He has made the earth as the image of his power; he envelops in his immensity air, ether, heaven; alone he has founded things which exist outside of him. Is not this the language of the Bible; and do we not seem to see here mingling together in the tent of Abraham, worships, which later on will be divided like human language? With the rude simplicity of pastoral life these hymns sparkle with the freshness of the dew of the first days of creation; they breathe the strong air of the mountain peaks. A natural sublimity shines everywhere; the rarity of the objects, their very monotony, the immensity of the horizon, the tempest, the fire, the scattered flocks, the vast pasture grounds, the silence; all help to give you an impression of the life of the first shepherds on the slopes of the Indian Alps. You behold a communion of the human race in the bosom of indefectible light. This common impression of the same daybreak, which communicates to all the same inner light, is their

only bond, the tie which binds the living and the dead. "They are dead who saw the dawn of yesterday; we see it to-day; they also will die who shall see the dawn of to-morrow." The same dawn, the same soul for all, the same humanity; this was the first alliance. Let us add that the language of their hymns, a union of brightness and sweetness as the sun on the dew, confirms this idea; for in them are found the principal words of our modern languages, like so many pearls at the bottom of a transparent sea.

To this magnificence of the theology of Nature is joined the liturgy of a childlike people. Indra rejoices in the heart of man as the cow in the pastures. He is hungry, he is everlastingly thirsty. He is attracted mainly by the promise of abundant drink. The shepherd invites him familiarly to his daily offering of milk, butter, and honey. He seats himself by the shepherd's fireside, while his winged horses are called to the pool. When he appears the night dew has already begun to quench his thirst. The torrents, the rivers, the lakes have all poured out their libation into his cup. In this idea of a god eternally insatiable, joined to the hunger such restless nomads must often have suffered, is to be found the first cause of the libation of offering, of sacrifice. As a matter of fact, these feasts given by the patriarchs to the first god are always followed by an interested prayer.

Although these hymns appear mingled in the same antiquity, they belong to very different ages. You see in the midst of this rude religion the dawn of the more learned religions which succeed, of other gods faintly sketched, phantoms of the infinite, first germs of Indian theogony, then a nascent trinity. Man, who hardly yet knows where to find his earthly food, demands food for his soul. In the twilight of his intelligence he incessantly confounds matter and spirit; his thoughts are constantly flying out towards some hoped-for felicity. Unity of God, polytheism, pantheism, all are contained at the same time in his first worship, just as an infant who on opening his eyes sees only one being who includes all. This is the reason why the hymns of these shepherds have become the pre-eminently sacred book, the principle of the Indian liturgy and civilisation; all rests upon it—tradition, law, customs, institutions; so that notwithstanding its original simplicity, each epoch, by turning it more and more from its natural sense, has drawn out of it a meaning increasingly spiritual and mystic.

If the religion of the Vedas offers resemblances to that of the Hebrews, it is almost entirely like that of the Persians. There is the same struggling god, creation the fruit of his victory; light fills the cradle of both these peoples; they have the same

hearth, the same hymns, in some cases the same names. The energy, the wandering and warlike spirit of these Indian gods, show their worshippers to have been at first a mountain people, pastoral and warlike. Yet a tepid puff of air from the plain throws an occasional languor over the hymns; proof that the people were descending into the valleys, and that the god of those who live the strong life of the hills is about to give way to the god of those who breathe the soft perfumes of the gulfs of Golconda and Bengal.

To conclude then, the first revelation in the East, the land of the Sun, is summed up in the idea of Light. And this light shone out, consecrated, crowned at the same moment all the high places. The same Aurora striking at one blow all the nascent peoples, there arose, as from a sonorous Memnon, one hymn of praise; the songs of the Abrahamic tribes uniting themselves with the prayers of the Indians and the Persians, while farther off in the West the quavers of Grecian flutes answer in the strains of Homer to the howling of the wolves and the roaring of the lions. The same revelation exhales from all the changeless Auroras in the unchanging sky of Asia. The gods are all brothers in the cradle, or rather it is the same God manifesting himself on every high place in the Burning Bush. The Elohim of the Hebrews, the princes of the Chaldean heaven, the cherubim with the flaming sword who guard the threshold of the Eternal azure, the sparkling angels of the Persians, are hardly to be distinguished from the family of the Indian Dawns, the kings of the air who bear aloft the morning hymn. Indra, Jehovah, inhabitants of the same immensity; light is their vestment, their messenger, their dwelling-place, their word, their very being; so that both, high above the crowd of patriarchs dazzled and prostrate, mingle in the bosom of the same unity, in the same uncreated torrent of splendour and life.

SEC. 2.—*The Indian Genesis—The Revelation of the Infinite by the Ocean.*

As the Vedas proceed a new social life is evident; the patriarchal age is gone, and great states appear under Indian Nimrods. In the forests ascetic anchorites appear; the conquered earth is given to the priests. The pastoral sacrifices of milk and butter and honey give place to the sacrifice of a horse by the warrior races. Then with no transition comes the mystical sacrifice of the inner man by the priesthood, the god

of the shepherds being eclipsed by the god of the priests, who is himself at once sacrifice and victim. The Vedas confound all these changes in the same antiquity, but this is the spirit of the East. No doubt it is in accordance with the nature of man to seek the solution of the greatest and most difficult questions from the moment he comes into being; not only the Vedas, but the Zend-Avesta and the Eddas, give proof of this inextinguishable curiosity.

But in the Vedas the evidences of two distinct ages are marked by peculiar traits; the localities are different, a new scene opens for a new god. The continual image of the floods announces a change of dwelling; the people have come down from the mountains, they have reached the shores of the gulfs. And to the revelation by Light, is added the revelation of the Infinite by the Ocean. The primitive sea, not yet profaned by an oar; a living desert, over which no voyager has ever passed; an immeasurable Being, breathing like some giant, now roaring, now murmuring, now silent, now disturbed, appears asleep, and seeming to create as it dreams. The new god sprang out of its bosom, all the harmonies of Brahma are with the Ocean; he calls himself the firstborn of the waters, he floats from Eternity in the wet calyx of a lotus; his eyes are like the water-lily. His word, exhaled from the midst of the shoreless sea, passes by like the breeze, the soul of all things; it is received by three recluses, children of the waters. His thought poises itself on the everlastingly peaceful waves, and the egg of the world floats as the brood of the invisible halcyon. Compare these harmonies with those of the preceding religion, and they become still more striking; for Brahma, far from being devoured by the thirst of Indra, suffices in himself; always full, always satisfied, principle of all things, he is mingled with all things, *as the salt with the sea water.*

If Indra has some resemblance to Jehovah, Brahma has none. Instead of the *fiat lux* of creation, the Indian Genesis is born of a reverie of the Infinite, tuned to the murmurs of the eternal waves; the thoughts of this great soul of the ocean rise audible, unfold themselves, sink one into the other; without activity, without will; overwhelmed with an infinite languor, the spirit of the waters half wakes; its sweet lotus-eyes open to the light, and in the look cast on itself it produces all the types of the visible universe; then it slumbers anew, it ebbs, fades away, and the whole universe falls again into nothing. It is thus by contemplation that the great cenobite, father of spirits, produces from within to without the body of the world on the mould of the Soul.

The Indian genius excels all others in exhibiting the meditations of this great solitary before he commenced his work. "Looking around him, the Spirit sees nothing but himself, and he is seized with fear; this is why man is always afraid when he is alone. However, he thinks, Why should I fear? there is nothing outside of me . . . . and this terror departs from him: but he feels no joy; this is why man is sad when he is alone." To terror succeeds desire; he wishes for another; and this desire, scarcely born, becomes the germ of all things. God incarnates himself under the form of the world: the sun is his look, the winds are his breath; the rays, his hair; the earth, his feet; the holy books, his word.

Creation thus begun, he passes through every degree of existence, from the infinitely great to the infinitely little. Thus, in producing the visible world, he divides and limits himself. His parts are divided among the various forms of his creatures, like the members of the sacred cow on the altar of the shepherds; whence the idea that the world is a permanent sacrifice of the Eternal. The Infinite suffers in the bounds of the finite, the Spirit has his passion in the ties of the body. The Ancient of Days offers himself to himself each day in oblation. First form of the mystical sacrifice, in which the god is at once the priest and the victim.

If the life of the universe is explained by this Spirit, the principle of all things, Death is represented as the work of another god who destroys all that the creative god produces. From the religion of the patriarchs this god has preserved the trait of constant hunger and thirst; this Indian Saturn feeds even on himself. By him the leaves decay, youth becomes old age, the river loses itself in the ocean, the year wanes in autumn. If he were left to himself the world would soon come to an end. But a third god appears, a restorer, a mediator, who transforms all to restore all. Thus, creation, destruction, revival, three forms of the universal existence, are represented in India by three persons in the same Being: Brahma, Siva, Vishnu. First form of the Trinity, it is the tripod upon which stand all the religions of antiquity.

Incarnation, Sacrifice of God, Trinity: thus the Gospel is not only prophesied by the Old Testament of the Hebrews, but by that of the entire human race; so that the spiritual tree which to-day overshadows the world was already enclosed in the first germ which was sown in the furrow of chaos.

The dominant and almost exclusive trait of this first religious philosophy is the sentiment of *the Being:* One, Sovereign, Inalienable, from which all emanates, and into which these

divine persons enter as soon as separated. This profound conscience of *the Being* in Itself, of the Absolute, the Infinite, is the foundation-stone of civil society; and the question where the history of the religions ought to commence is here for the second time resolved. India has beyond all made what may be called *the Declaration of the Rights of the Being;* it is this which marks its function in history, all dogmas being only a consequence of this first *credo* of Humanity in Infinite Life.

This divine I, this society of the Infinite with himself, is the foundation, the root of all life, all history, of every religion, every individual society; since this conscience of the Eternal fills up all duration, so that it is impossible to go beyond it without falling into the void. This supreme unity absorbs all, how will it give birth to polytheism? But we must quit the hymn for the narrative, the Vedas for the Epics, the Orpheus of India for its Homer.

SEC. 3.—*Indian Religion in its relation with Epic Poetry.*

India, like Greece, has two principal poems—the Ramayana and the Maha-bharata. The lesser of these two poems numbers at least 30,000 verses. Their form defies analysis. It is like some vast virgin forest where there are no main roads, but a thousand paths branching out in all directions. Their exuberance can only be compared to that Indian tree of which the branches falling to the earth strike root, and spring up to become trees themselves, repeating the process indefinitely. Quinet proceeds to consider:—I. The relations of this poetry with the author; II. With religion; III. With nature in Asia; IV. With the civil institutions and the general history of India.

I. The name of the poet is Valmiki, and everything indicates that he belonged to the priestly caste. To prepare himself for his work he retires into the depths of a sacred forest, where at the bottom of a valley he has a sanctuary. He makes ablutions in the divine waters of Tomosa. His disciples bring his religious vestments to the banks of the river; and when he comes out of the floods, his stainless spirit is ready faithfully to reproduce the imperishable images that the gods wish to imprint upon it.

Scarcely has he completed his preparation by prayer and fasting, when Brahma descends and visits him in his leafy hut. Valmiki prostrates himself before the god, then offers him a seat,

and after having washed his feet, invokes him by the Eternal Salvation. Brahma then orders him to sing Rama, the hero of the warrior caste.

Thus this poem at the opening is an act of worship. It is a sacerdotal epic, differing in this from any that have ever arisen among the Greek, Roman, or modern civilisations. In the Ramayana and the Maha-bharata it is not a question of an artist and his work, but of a god, a priest, a sanctuary, a solemn ceremonial, the offering of harmonious language; and these epics are placed in the ranks of the sacred books. He who reads them is promised deliverance from his sins, and exemption from all evil in the person of his son and grandson. If by chance a slave should hear them, he would thereby be ennobled. This poetry born of the inspiration of a priestly caste is the peculiar characteristic of Indian civilisation.

Instead of proceeding at once to execute his divine commission, Valmiki spends a long time in meditating over the beauty, the nobility of his hero,—this forms his first poem. Still longer does he meditate over the general plan of the work; rising into the serene, and then lovingly contemplating the perfection of a poem which will be a marvellous ocean filled with all the pearls of the Vedas.

When completed it is made known to the world by two disciples, young men of illustrious, not to say divine origin, who, coming and falling down at Valmiki's feet, are taught the poem of Rama. They go from court to court, from temple to temple, repeating the poem, but only to kings, warriors, and priests; it is not permitted to *Soudras* to hear such words. These Indian rhapsodists resemble the minstrels of the Middle Age wandering from castle to castle singing the songs of Arthur and of Charlemagne.

For, like those romaunts, the subject of both the Indian epics is a religious war. Like the knights of chivalry, their heroes go out to succour hermits, priests, and recluses, whose altars and monasteries are menaced by a strange people. The life they reveal is an anticipation of Catholic civilisation. The analogy would be complete but for one difference. In the East, pantheism :—God confounded with creation; in the West :—the personality of God distinct from the Universe. This is the abyss that separates the two worlds, and it is more profound than the ocean which divides them.

II. If we look now at the relations of the Indian epic with Religion we shall be struck with an extraordinary fact, one the like of which we shall not find in any other literature. All the heroes of these poems are incarnate gods, who have consented to assume

the forms and the sorrows of humanity. To raise the universe from its fall God becomes man, suffers, groans, weeps, fights, accepts every condition of human life, even death itself. And this is not only true of the principal hero; follow out any character, and in the end you discover that he is a god.

At the same time that the gods thus dwell in men, they are also seen in heaven in their own particular domains. God being everywhere, and immediately present, incarnates himself at once in several heroes, in a family, in a whole race of men. He converses with himself, he seeks himself, pursues himself, hardly leaving any place for Humanity to act or to develop. All is in motion in the bosom of the same infinite Person, who everlastingly transforms himself in each creature, in the blade of grass, the wave of the river, the prince of the serpents, the king of men, so that the hero of the epic is really the hero of pantheism.

III. These poems trace not only the history of beliefs, but they paint to the life the physical appearance and climate of Upper Asia. They attempt to explain, by colossal and artless images, the origin and history of the natural objects around them. One of the most famous fragments of the poem is the birth of the Ganges. Under the boldest and most resplendent imagery, the river, still preserving its natural form, is represented as possessing a mind, a will, a soul of its own. Another original trait of the Indian epic is the intimate alliance between man and animal society. The wise king of the vultures, the bold chief of the apes, the prudent king of the serpents, bind themselves by treaties with the king of men; Humanity does not seem yet to command subject nature in an absolute manner.

IV. If, from the examination of religion and nature, we wish to have a picture of civil and domestic life, we must enter into the great city Ayodhya, founded by Manu, king of men. This Indian Troy is described in the glowing hyperbole of the East.

In this abode of asceticism strange dynasties of kings slowly succeed each other, each of whom lives ages upon ages. On their knees, motionless, with hands outstretched towards heaven, they seem to typify ages of prayers and contemplations. Each people thus sums up its memories in imaginary chiefs made in its own image. In India the first kings are ascetic figures, who, after having evoked from the depths of the forests the first forms of civil society, preserve their empires by the sole power of meditation. To make the revolutions of the world thus depend on the collectedness of a spirit is one of the noblest features of this poetry.

Above the king is the priest, dwelling sometimes in the depths of the forest, sometimes in a monastic cell. On every important occasion the king visits him, and, prostrating himself at his feet, asks counsel. So great is the power of the macerations of these priests that the gods themselves fear to be outshone by such virtues.

To them the hero blindly submits; he is their pupil and instrument. To be humble and courteous, to obey the Brahmins devoted to the study of the Vedas, to receive their instruction as the drink of immortality; these are great virtues with the Indian hero.

The relations of the warrior and the Indian priest are precisely those of the valiant knight and the hermit in the romaunts of the Round Table. Percival le Gallois, Lancelot du Lac, Tristan, lead the same kind of life as Rama, Bharata, and the other heroes of the Indian race. Like them they pursue an ideal of moral perfection under the symbol of the Holy Graal. Both races of heroes live lives of perpetual maceration; only instead of arming himself against the seductions of his heart, the Indian has to be on his guard against the seductions of nature.

The king of the gigantic city supplicates heaven for posterity; the Supreme Divinity descends and incarnates Himself in four sons. They are brought up by the priests, who instruct them in the Vedas, and at a given time request the old king that they may be sent to war against the king of the infidels. The father hesitates, but finally yields to the orders of the priests. The young men receive enchanted arms, among which is a bow none can bend. In a truly Homeric scene, Rama breaks this bow. You might almost fancy a page of the Greek poet had fallen in India out of the perfumed casket of Alexander. After a series of combats, the glorious Rama is exiled by his father, misled by unfounded suspicions. Death at last appears approaching, and the venerable monarch falls a prey to bitter remorse.

Rama is meanwhile lost in contemplation of the forests, the mountains, and the rivers. It has been thought that this sensitiveness to Nature is entirely modern; but here is a poem, perhaps three thousand years old, which supposes a tender intimacy between Man and Nature beyond anything realised in the present day.

Ravished by this love, Rama passes ages in an ecstasy of joy, delighting in the perfumes, the silence of these virgin forests. The prince with the lotus eyes has for companion Sita, his spouse, who resembles the moon emerging from the shadows of the forest, and to whom he discourses concerning the sweet, the loving river Ganges.

This portion of the poem might bear comparison with the

conversations of Adam and Eve in "Paradise Lost," or to the reveries of Tristan and Yseult in the old feudal poets. But Asiatic poetry is distinguished from the modern poetry of the West by the way in which human love is, as it were, buried in the love of nature. Sita is only one of the ornaments of nature, only one flower more hidden in the sacred forest. Rama, the faithful representative of the genius of the Hindoo races, mingles voluptuousness with asceticism. He refuses the empire that he may give himself to the sole contemplation of the loveliness of nature. Thus the Indian people have withdrawn from history and the real world, that they may yield themselves to this fascination. They too have refused the diadem of Asia. More than once, and always in vain, history has sought to provoke them to come out of their valley, but they have refused to quit the enchantress; the whole world passes before them, and every human race has visited them in turn, but none have ever been able to tear them from their ecstasy.

Asceticism has been the principle of the poetry of India and of the West in the Middle Age, because in both societies it has been a principle of civilisation. As the fathers of the Thebaid at the time of the seductions of the Roman Empire, the Indian heroes closed their eyes and ears to the lustre and noise of the sensible world; they maintain in themselves the conscience of humanity, in danger of being stifled at its birth by the delights of an exuberant sensuality. The macerations of this priestly people in the garden of Upper Asia is only the protest of Mind bent on establishing an equilibrium between matter and spirit. On this first combat depended all the others. Should man be the master or the slave of nature? The saints who, at the origin of Christian civilisation, fought, as the hydra or the Python reborn, the instincts of pagan nature, were the Hercules and Theseus of modern humanity.

It would seem as if Indian society could never have known youth, so full is its earliest poem of philosophical reflections, and of sentiments which should be born at periods far distant one from the other. The epic of Valmiki sums up the genius of a people who have gone through every phase, and worn out all the doctrines of social life: cosmogony, genesis, traditions which attest the infancy of human intelligence, memorials of the struggles of two primitive races, monuments of the formation of the Indian people, sentiments of melancholy, of tenderness, reveries of a society already satiated with itself, schools of philosophy, scepticism, irony, metaphysical sects, royalty of logicians, mark of a religion and a civilisation in its decline: and all this mingled and placed one over the other just as the diverse epochs of nature are seen in the same moun-

tain from the primitive rock to the new flower and the insect just born. Here is a case in which, contrary to that of the Iliad, we have a great epic which is clearly not the work of one man but of many generations.

These poets of the Ganges are possessed by their subject rather than possessors of it. Wandering across immensity, they add episode to episode, so that the issue of their composition is only possible in eternity. Their style is, like the action of their poems, as rich in precious stones as the sides of the Himalayas. Accustomed to the dim light of our northern lands, we are dazzled by the prodigal treasures of Oriental eloquence. It is not rare to find in these poems for one object well-nigh fifty comparisons accumulated, crushing out life under the weight of simile. Yet at times the expression becomes simple, naked, sudden. It is as if you wandered at hazard in a forest, its depths resounding only with the murmurs of living nature; voiceless phantoms, winged reptiles, flit confusedly across the quivering branches; horror increases. Suddenly you discover steps in these solitudes; a cry rises close by, the cry of a man like yourself.

SEC. 4.—*Indian Pantheism in its relation to the Institution of the Family and of Caste.*

In a society formed upon the idea of a divinity, which envelops it on all sides, which it hears, feels, tastes in everything, a man must remain motionless; he dare not kill an insect, since God dwells even in the creature of a day. If the Indian people are but the incarnation of the Eternal in human society, why should a man struggle, why should he try to substitute his private will for that of the Being who lives in the State? A society thus formed will hardly resolve even to struggle in its own defence; it will be conquered as soon as it is known; patient matter in the hand of its god, its natural condition is never to belong to itself. No great name will arise in such a society, for Alexander himself would have left no impression on this human ocean. The family is absorbed in its chief, the chief in his caste, the caste in God. Not only individuals, but even generations will not be distinguished from each other; there will be no division but that of castes, which being to-day what they ever were, will go back into the infinite; so that India has no more history than the bananas of its valleys or the floods of the Pacific. Such a society is to modern man what the vegetable world is to the animal, the cryptogram to the worm of the earth.

And yet the constitution of Indian society bears traces of all

its former confusions, and its past is fully recounted in its laws. The leading idea in this first constitution of Oriental humanity is that it has been granted by God himself. Its law has been revealed as that of Sinai; not, however, in the midst of thunder, but in the silence of ascetic contemplation. Old men approach an anchorite plunged in meditation. They ask him in the name of new-born man to teach them the law; the hermit reveals to them the commandments of the Supreme Being; after which he declares to them that he is this Being, incarnate, under the form of the sage Manu; whence it follows that the god of India is also its Moses; and from this pantheism, so naively inscribed in its law, spring out at once all the leading traits of Oriental society.

In appearance this law is singularly gentle. Relations one of another, every animate and inanimate being is to be respected as a member of the great family of God. The life of a bird, an antelope, a horse, is estimated according to the rank it occupies in the universal hierarchy. Woman is protected, but only by the same title as the flowers, the gazelles, the morning dew. They have in some sort a poetic right; the law honouring them, treating them as the graceful in creation. If in the West the union of Christ and his Church, one, indivisible, is the spiritual figure, the principle of Christian marriage; the multiple union of God and Nature, the innumerable and equally legitimate espousals of Brahma, are the figure and religious principle of Oriental marriage. What renders the institution of polygamy sacred is nothing but this principle of pantheism applied to the idea of the family; and if we follow out this thought, we find that just as in the marriage of God with Nature the first is everything, the latter only appearance, nothing, in fact; so in this sad Oriental family the head absorbs all existence and rights; the mother and children are really nothing before him.

From a more general point of view, the institution of the family in the East has known only the reign of the father. The Jehovah of the old alliance, without posterity, without companion, sole dispenser, sole possessor of the heavenly patrimony, gives the character of the father in the human family of antiquity; he alone has the fulness of the social life, not having, so to speak, either wife or children, all being alike slaves before him. Therefore it is, in the strictest sense, right to say that the Son of Man came into the world with the Son of God in the cradle of Bethlehem. The family completed itself on earth as in heaven; the persons of the woman and the child became inviolably consecrated on earth at the moment that the persons of the Son and of the Spirit sat down in heaven by the side of the Father.

Caste is the real family in Asia, and the peculiar feature in Oriental law. No one can go out of the caste in which he was born, each caste has its own peculiar virtues; a condition of things which supposes the existence of several states, one lying upon the other, just as one strata lies over the other in the inert clay. How is it that those who are at the bottom of the ladder have accepted the position? A principle, uncontested by all, has alone been able to give a sanction to such an extraordinary state of things.

The existence of a warrior class clearly indicates conquest; but has this condition of things come about by violence alone? We know what conquest is in the West; we have known in our day what that terrible news implies: "The battle is lost." Why at this cry does a shudder run through the heart? why do men of iron weep? Not merely for the cities lost, for the harvests destroyed, for the lives lost. These things are reparable. What makes the anguish is the thought that a people has become the property, the thing of another; that it has lost its law, its social life, its moral personality, its rank in the human race.

And this, rarely now the case in the West, was always the fate of the conquered nation in the East. For them there was no *Renaissance*, a people defeated was a people dead; the conquerors sat upon the corpse of the captive nation, decapitated it socially, and caste was formed. Henceforth the enslaved became the hewers of wood and drawers of water, the fall coming not only upon their children, but upon their children's children through all generations. Their dejection is so profound that they forget that they belonged to themselves; their language alters; little by little they become a phantom of a people, without thought, memories, or hopes, and end in being, so to speak, a dumb race. Chained one to the other, they cannot marry legitimately; giving birth to a posterity worse than themselves, they profit little from the changelessness about them, since they alone are dragged lower and lower by an ever continuous fall. India, Persia, Egypt are seated on peoples thus overthrown, living caryatides who never reject the burden.

To say that conquest is the cause of caste is only to throw the question back a step, not to answer it. Conquest has in Asia alone produced its full results, because pantheism has been the religion of Asia. As it established polygamy in the family, so pantheism has established caste in the state. Oriental society is formed on the image of its god; the priestly caste is his mouth, the warrior caste his shoulders, the trading castes his thighs, the labouring castes his feet. As in the physical incarnation, so in this social genesis the divine suffers a series of degradations. As in the divine nature there are three gods, in

some sense inimical to each other, so in the human family there are three divisions. From this social unity the industrial class is excluded, since pantheism places all those who labour or till the ground in the position of persons who attack or destroy the divine being in one or other of his forms. Worst kind of slavery, in which a people cannot live without work, cannot work without sin, cannot sin without being cast out of the civil law. And since the doctrine itself is part of God, it can only be communicated to those who are pure; so that the holy books are eternally closed to those who most need them. To take away hope from earth, it is necessary first of all to close heaven.

To reform these social inequalities the nature of the god worshipped must be reformed, by the proclamation of his absolute indivisibility. In like manner you could not alter family law in India without overturning dogma, or change the dogma without overturning the family. Religious history in Oriental antiquity is a continual dismemberment of God, followed by an increasing dismemberment of society; when at last inferior gods begin to crowd on to the scene, then we find the inferior races outside the sovereign unity, and castes alienated from the state, becoming as numerous as industries and families.

What confirms this idea is, that where pantheism ceases to reign, caste is not found; as, for instance, in China. Nay, it would seem that a defeated nation which maintained its belief in the Divine Unity could not thus be reduced. Led into captivity again and again, we meet the Hebrew people everywhere, their hands tied behind their back, scourged by the warriors and priests of Asia. But though reduced to bodily slavery, no power could conquer their spirit. The Hebrew people remained one, indivisible, unsubdued as its God. It is never absorbed into any society that conquers it, because its worship never becomes the complement of any other. Its personality, its individuality, has been saved with that of Jehovah; under this divine cuirass it has resisted, even in slavery, all the weight of the East. A sublime equality shines forth amongst the Hebrews; on the one side the Eternal, on the other the Hebrew people. These are the only political powers in the great charter of Judæa. Saul comes from the plough, David from the sheepfold, Amos from the class which everywhere else in the East have hardly the value of the insect. Equality of all before the King of heaven, here is the constitution from which the universal religion was to go forth. How could the Christ have arisen from the castes of India, of Persia, of Egypt? The God of equality could only be born amongst the families of Palestine, already on one level under the law of the Most

High. That which was true of the Hebrew people alone the Christ has extended to the whole earth; through Him every man is become an inhabitant of the greater Sion.

As long as pantheism was the soul of the Greek religions the remains of caste may be seen in the West. But a great change came. The priestly caste disappeared with the divine right. Man, enamoured more with himself than with nature, no longer hesitated to drive the plough into the bosom of Cybele. The Olympian gods form one family under one sovereign father. This religious sentiment reflected in the state produces the φρατρία, the brotherhood or political family, the foundation of the Greek democracy. The divine areopagus on the summits of Olympus is repeated in every Greek city; on the plan of this divine society is formed the political society of which Pericles is the Jupiter.

The Roman gods are, on the contrary, isolated from public life. Their originality consists in being *penates*, captives in the interior of the city or of the house. Existing in couples, these celestial spouses never marry below their rank; born together, they die together; never divorced, in their existence is the consecration of the indissoluble marriage of ancient Roman society. Each family has its own rites, its own priesthood, its personal worship, its guardian Jupiter, who, aided by the dog, watches at the threshold of the domicile. The poor as well as the rich has thus his Olympus gathered under his own roof, and private worship becomes the first foundation of private right. Ennobled in his own eyes by his domestic *lares*, the Roman plebeian will never fall to the rank of the Indian *soudra*. As long as these humble genii, crowned with rosemary and violets, smile propitious at his fireside, he feels that he counts for something in the world of spirits. He agitates, rises, struggles within the circle of the laws, without revolting or submitting. He only despairs when Catiline warns him that the familiar lares will no longer be his. As long as these rude *penates* are seated by the poor man's hearth, the rights of the individual are maintained in Rome, and caste rendered impossible. From their faithful help and sympathy, the miserable gathers fresh strength; and as often as he returns home crushed by the contempt of the Senate, the sight of these patrons of his fathers encourages him to maintain his rights. The patricians may do their utmost to destroy these divinities of plaster; they cannot break the genius of the individual of the family, or bring in Oriental organisation. On the other hand, in order that the plebeian may triumph, he only needs to recognise his basis in the divine world. He finds it, and the discovery changes all; from that moment the usurpation of the military and priestly

power by the aristocracy is its weakness rather than its strength. The democracy, following it to the altar, invades all; and in the end the only immortal part of the Roman civilisation is just this private religion translated into the language of the laws. What in reality is Roman law, if not the accumulated science of the domestic *lares* and *penates?*

The Christ is born, and the world seems to fall back into the Eastern organisation. Society in the Middle Age seems apparently a reproduction of the hierarchy of the East. And its inequalities seem as irremediable, since they are consecrated by the dogma of predestination. The small number of the elect, forming a sort of heavenly oligarchy, is the sanction of terrestrial feudality; and grace without merit or demerit calls for the reign of good pleasure on earth as in heaven. Under such a heaven the cry of subject weakness can easily be silenced, for why should men complain of being unequal before the state when they are unequal before God? Was the world about to return to its ancient servitude? On the contrary, it was approaching equality, since the sacerdotal order which elsewhere divided all, in Christianity reconciled all. Everywhere else was inequality; in the cloister the king became the equal or the inferior of the serf, the Frank and the Roman became brothers. All differences of position or birth vanish in the modern priesthood at the same time that all the gods, great and small, lose themselves in the supreme unity of the Christian God. Hierarchy ceasing in heaven, ceases little by little to be consecrated on earth; the unity which reigns among the persons of the celestial family establishes itself in the civil family; from the unity of God is born the conscience of the unity of the human race.

The Catholic priesthood, as instituted by Gregory VII., was a progress on that of the Brahmins and of the Egyptians, but it was not less a caste, since no one could quit it. All who entered it must separate themselves from the rest of the human families. Thus the principle of caste under an indirect form has been preserved in all societies still obedient to the Church; and, as we shall see later on, every people thus imprisoned has in vain struggled for full possession of modern liberties.

SEC. 5.—*The Indian Drama in its relations with Religion.*

The dramatic era is that in which men begin to discuss their creeds. As long as man accepts his creed passively there is unity and inward peace; it is only when by doubt he enters into a struggle with the Eternal that man becomes a tragic per-

sonage. This explains two things which have not been noticed: first, it is only among peoples who have a philosophy that there is any drama; second, that they appear together in the highest degree of excellence at the same time. Sophocles is the contemporary of Socrates, Shakespeare of Bacon, Corneille of Descartes, Schiller of Kant; and nowhere is this law more evident than in the East, if we consider how in the Indian drama religion is changed by the united liberties of art and philosophy, the priesthood appearing eclipsed by the monarchy, and degraded to such an extent that the buffoon of the piece is nearly always a Brahmin.

Pantheism, regarded strictly, excludes the idea of drama. What tragedy can break out in the bosom of this God everywhere present, in whom all things move and breathe, and who is himself the only personage? This universe being only an imaginary spectacle that the Supreme Being gives himself, Nature, the grand enchantress, can be the only tragedian that comports with such a religion. From this principle all the forms of the Indian stage are derived; the whole universe is the scene; that which commences on earth finishes in heaven. Sometimes in the piece a double drama is enacted; one among the gods, the other among men. The characters are mere phantoms of poetry, while the gentleness of the religious law prevents the stage from being the scene of bloodshed, so that the heroes are not killed, but carried off in the moment of difficulty to the regions of eternal peace. The Indian drama offers no resemblance to that of Greece or Rome, but presents some striking analogies to the fairy drama of Calderon and Shakespeare. It unites the serious and the comic, the most exalted poetry with the most subtle irony. It anticipates, in certain respects, the Western genius, so cleverly does it rally the exaltation and bombast of the Oriental genius. Scenes occur between kings and their buffoons recalling the dialogues of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

Instead of being confined as in the Greek to the chorus, the lyric inspiration overflows everywhere in the Indian drama. It is naturally, however, concentrated in some monologues, real hymns, which recall the choruses of Œdipus in Colonus. These songs mark as with diamond columns the divisions of the drama.

A continual apotheosis of love, the Indian theatre receives from pantheism a character peculiar to itself. Nature becomes the emblem, the image of the person loved, who is, so to speak, hidden under all the forms of the world. Not only is love in the Indian drama totally different from what it is in the Greek or Roman drama, but it is essentially religious, confounding the person loved with the ideal of worship, or rather with the

visible infinite. Man, plunged into the abyss of love, cannot distinguish his own idol from the universal idol, hence his danger; for Nature herself, palpitating and amorous, nourishes and excites in each of her creatures the passion she feels. Hence one source of the pathetic in the Indian drama, the intense love of man for living nature. This rivalry in the heart of man between his love for natural objects and for human beings, if not the subject of the drama of S'akoontalá, is at least its principal charm. The young girl is about to leave the forest in which she has been born, to be united to her lover, who is the king of the country; the nymphs of the forest have prepared garlands for the bride, when just before she leaves her father a Brahmin addresses the trees and the sacred forests, telling them S'akoontalá is about to leave them; a choir of invisible voices bless her with Nature's blessings; S'akoontalá declares that at the moment of parting with the forest her strength gives way; a young girl cries: "Listen, listen; the forest also groans as the hour of separation draws nigh; the gazelle refuses the grass gathered for her; the peacocks no more disport themselves on the green turf; the plants in the woods drop their wan leaves, their perfume and beauty are gone."

S'akoontalá.—O my father! let me yet speak to this madhavi-flower that I call my sister, whose red clusters shine like a flame in the woods.

The Brahmin.—My child, I know thy love for this plant.

S'akoontalá.—O most beautiful of plants, receive my embraces; let thy tendrils, in twining themselves around me, return my caresses! From this day forth, notwithstanding my absence, I shall be always with thee. O my father! care for this plant as you would care for me.

The Brahmin.—I will marry thy dear plant to its betrothed, the amra-tree, which even now scatters his perfume around her. Take courage, O my daughter! pursue thy journey.

S'akoontalá.—Ah! who has the skirt of my dress? what keeps me yet?

The Brahmin.—It is the fawn, whose lips thou hast so often healed with the sacred balm when they have been cut by the sharp grass; the little roebuck thou hast so often fed from thy hand with grains of syamaka. It would follow the steps of its benefactress.

S'akoontalá.—Why weep for me, sweet creature? I must quit our common home. As I cared for thee ever since thou didst love thy mother, so he who has been to me as a father will give thee nourishment. Go away, then; we must separate. (She embraces her father.) Torn from the bosom of my father,

as the young tamala tree from the soil of the Himalaya mountains, how shall I be able to grow in foreign earth?[1]

Where shall we find anything like this dialogue between man and mute nature? It is only possible in a land where the individual vegetates unchangeable in his caste; where society, the family, are themselves only part of its moral vegetation.

Of all the characters of the Indian theatre, Śakoontalá is its best and noblest representative. As Agamemnon, or Hamlet, or Faust represent the drama in other lands, this young girl is the type of the whole Indian race. Greek and Roman polytheism can offer nothing that wears a sweetness so nearly Christian.

SEC. 6.—*Philosophy in its relations with Religion—Buddhism.*

The originality of the philosophy of the Ganges is summed up in the question, a question to be found at the bottom of all its systems—How can Man become God? Excess of spiritual ambition united to excess of humility, is the characteristic of Indian thought. For while man, on the one hand, claims to become not only equal to God, but God himself; on the other, this arrogance is soon disturbed by the contrary sentiment: he confesses that before he can deify himself he must lose all consciousness of himself, before he adores himself he must annihilate himself; so that the consummation of the god in him is only attained when there remains nothing more of the man. To get rid of all the ties of the universe; to distinguish himself from Nature, the better to escape metempsychosis; to close the return into the circle of finished things; to take flight from the region of sense into the domain of the immutable; to lose himself there, to vanish away there; to be satisfied with ecstasy, to be lost for ever in an eternal quietism: such is the object of the sage. By passive contemplation of the Being, he becomes Brahma; whence it follows that the less conscience he has of internal movements the nearer he is to his apotheosis. The nascent pride of Oriental philosophy is hidden under an excess of disinterestedness and of holy indifference. In this and in its historical development Indian philosophy finds analogies in the Christian world. In both civilisations the duel of faith and of reason has in many respects followed the same course. At first Indian philosophy is orthodox, inimical to

[1] For a beautiful translation of this passage, partly in English verse, see Professor Monier Williams' "Śakoontalá, or the Lost Ring. From the Sanskrit of Kálidása." Act IV.

reason, supporting itself on the Vedas as interpreted by the saints; in its second stage, beginning to regard itself as something, it undertakes to confirm the truths of religion. Very soon, under the breath of the Indian Descartes, the hosts of material gods are changed into abstractions and moral faculties. Indra with his three heads, and the more subtle trinity of Brahma, founded on the idea of Being in itself, of its creative word, and of the grand soul of things, both become mere metaphysical abstractions. Finally, philosophy revolts against dogma, crushes tradition into powder, peoples the world with sterile atoms; and, furious to destroy everything, turns at last against itself.

Doubt arrived at its last limit, faith is born again of spiritual death. A new religion springs out of this abyss of abstractions; the East is still so full of God that scepticism only ends there by giving birth to the New Testament of India.

In its most extreme departure from orthodoxy, Indian doubt retains its gods, only contesting their eternal duration. When, from examination after examination, philosophy reached the absolute void, instead of shrinking from the abyss like the European doubter, the Indian went on until he arrived at a new belief. Outside all created things, outside every form or limit, beyond light and darkness, beyond the bounds of all thought, he found a God who had no relation with the world. Never did Christianity, even in the heart of the Middle Age, so absolutely anathematise Matter. To the Oriental the visible world was an imposture; he wished to tear off the mask that covered the universe. In this heroic age of philosophy the human spirit fought quite naked. The better to resist matter, it began by planting itself in the attitude of victory at the last confines of the ideal. Here, as it were, at the antipodes both of Nature and Tradition, it found another heaven, another god; for out of the last efforts of philosophy to overthrow everything, came forth the revelation of Buddha, a religion which counts to-day a number of adherents greater than the united hosts of all who profess Christianity and Islamism.

Such exalted spiritualism, it is clear, could not submit to the Vedas; hence one would expect that it would have brought on itself the combined hatred of the people and the Brahmins. A doctrine, moreover, founded on the revelation of the Nothing could scarcely escape the charge of Atheism. Nevertheless, we find that not only vast empires like a part of China, Ceylon, Java, Thibet, repose on these subtle metaphysics, but that the story of the incarnation of this impersonal being, Buddha, springs up even in the depths of the steppes of Mongolia.

What have been the social consequences of the new dogma? Buddhism is in some respects the opposite to pantheism. In the trinity of Brahminism the three persons form a kind of polytheism, in that of Buddhism only the first person has any value, so that virtually the unity of God is believed. The consequence is at once visible in the unity of the human race, the natural result of which is the abolition of castes. This consequence has been in reality deduced by Buddhism with an intrepidity of logic which seems only to belong to the East. Christianity itself, in its purest charity, has not proclaimed more irrevocably the equality of all men. "The distinction of races," said one of these Asiatic abolitionists, "is marked by organisation. Thus the foot of the elephant differs from that of the horse, the foot of the tiger from that of the bull; but I never heard that the foot of the Soudra differs from that of the Brahmin. In like manner, the eagle, the hawk, the turtle-dove, the paroquet, are each distinguished by plumage, flight, colour, and beak; but priests, warriors, labourers, artisans, are the same in flesh, skin, blood, form, and bones: all men being alike, without and within, are assuredly but one caste."

Such is the theory. But what else can result from this spiritualism born of doubt than a negative morality and a society ever bent on its own dissolution?

Since the dogma exacts the abolition of all private or collective personality, Buddhism left to itself tends to a rejection of such ideas as the Nation, the State, the Government, the only true society being the Monastery. The true believer has no country but the convent; and as all that recalls individual right is contrary to the spirit of his religion, it follows that he can possess nothing of his own. The Buddhist, from his very nature, belongs to the mendicant orders. All alliance, except with the invisible, being wrong, marriage is condemned; but since in this exaggerated idealism each reform goes so far as to become impossible, polygamy is simply corrected by celibacy, property by almsgiving. The rigorous consequence of Buddhist dogma would result in the absolute extinction of humanity.

It is quite confounding to see how, notwithstanding all the differences of place and time, the same spiritual type has produced in the Catholicism of the Middle Age and in the Buddhism of Central Asia institutions, manners, singularities, so exactly similar that the East and the West seem like plagiarisms one of another. The legends of the Buddhists of Ceylon, as those of the monasteries of Cîteaux or St. Gall, are full of the foundation of convents of men and women, missions among foreign nations, pilgrimages, benediction of relics, indulgences, preachings, œcu-

menic councils to combat schism, extirpate heresy, and maintain the faith.

The architectural monument peculiar to this religion is a colossal reliquary, an impenetrable temple, covered by a piled-up heap of rocks, preserving and hiding some strip of the dress or of a ring made of the hair of the incarnate god, just as St. John Latran shelters in Rome the remains of the cross of Calvary. At the head of this monastic organisation is a true papacy, with this great difference, however, that the chief of the hierarchy is not the Vicar of God but God himself, always incarnate and always present in the midst of his people.

If Indian society has lived, it is owing to the profound consciousness it has had of the *Being*, even after it has passed through scepticism. But this idea, great as it is, does not suffice for Man. Individuality, morality, conscience, activity, liberty, where shall we find them? Not in the Indian genius, since Buddhism as well as Brahminism teaches that inaction, the eternal slumber in the bosom of the Eternal Substance, is *the* good, the way of salvation, the supreme virtue.

SEC. 7.—*The Religions of China—Revelation by Writing.*

The civilisation of the Brahmins is balanced in Asia by the civilisation of the Mandarins. The one carries the Ideal to its farthest limits, the other the Real. Suspended between these two worlds, Upper Asia remains perfectly motionless.

Revelation manifests itself in China in a manner so strange, that it is clear from the first that the Chinese must live unallied with the human race. While the prophets of the rest of Asia watch the Dawn, Fo-hi, the Chinese revealer, born of a virgin, who conceives him as she wanders alone on the track of the divine footsteps, descends into the flat marshes on the banks of the Yellow River. There, fixed in the slime of chaos, he sees an enormous tortoise, and in the mysterious lines imprinted on its shell descrys the divine wisdom. That motionless tortoise is the emblem of the coming empire, those hieroglyphs on its back the table of the Chinese law. In these forms Fo-hi sees all the lines of the Universe, the shapes of mountains, rivers, seas, lakes, &c., and draws the inference that in these lines God reveals himself to men. This gigantic conception of writing becomes the basis of all divine science. As God is revealed to India by light, to the Persians by light and speech, to the Greeks by the lyre, he is revealed to China by the marvel of writing. Elementarily these divine hieroglyphs reduce themselves to two lines, images of the two principles which compose

the world: a continuous line, ——, heaven, light, affirmation, the eternal, the infinite; a broken line,——, earth, darkness, contradiction, time, the finite. All other ideas are expressed by a mixture of these two lines in some form or other. Instead of conceiving of man as attempting from the very first to depict the immeasurable, the Chinese think of him as a little child trying to represent in writing the simplest objects around him. The divine schoolmaster holds his hand, and guides his first attempts, placing before him, as copies, the lines of the universe. Traced under the eye of the master, these marvellous letters are the types of an infinite number of relations and truths, which meditation may discover. Each line is a parable, which will manifest its most profound sense to him who contemplates it with the most concentration. All form together the representation of every fact in the physical or spiritual order of things; and are the substance of the first religious book, the "Y-King," the source of all knowledge of things visible or invisible. Upon the plan of this revealed geometry as interpreted by tradition, and completed by the philosophy of Confucius, it has been the aim of the Chinese legislator to construct civil order.

While in its swaddling clothes this society must have grasped the idea of unity in the universe, for the same signs are archetypes in the world of nature and the world of mind; thus, for example, the sign which represents the harmony of land and water is the sign which expresses the idea of any good policy founded on the union of two empires. Thus, again, the sign of fire in the highest point of the sky represents a law of nature, and is the sign proposed for the imitation of the prince who should fill the entire universe with the lustre of his virtues. From which we see that conscience is recognised by the institution, but that it ought to be regulated on the imitation of the revealed sign as among Christians, on the imitation of the cross. This geometric revelation not only figures forth all knowledge of the present, but, by following it out in all its possible changes, the future can also be discovered. The invention of writing being then a divine revelation, each sign, each line, and every turn in each line, has an absolute authority; the whole of Chinese society, in its various rites and ceremonies, in its chords and its combinations, being only a translation, a living application of this revelation.

Since the primitive source of authority is hidden under the curves of writing, it is clear that the divine election must fall on those who best understand the mystery of these signs. Thus a society has come into being of scribes, of *literati*, in which the civil hierarchy is formed, by competitive examinations, leading to a government founded on the knowledge of the letter of the

sacred book, rather than on theocracy, or nobility of races, or the rights of property or wealth, or even the sovereignty of the multitude. Inequality of conditions is born only of inequality of acquired lights; political power is measured on science; so that China presents an example of a whole people who, from examination to examination, is distributed into bachelors, licentiates, doctors, just as others are divided into proletarians, plebeians, patricians. Every one writes, from the good man who records at evening on his tablet the actions of the day, to the monarch who writes prefaces to the principal works, and who is attended by scribes recording day and night his actions and his words. History, as another consequence of this hierographic institution, is not the work of an individual, but becomes a real source of national authority. In addition to all this, Chinese philosophy displays remarkable originality in the ingenious manner in which it has subordinated the freest movements of the human conscience to the geometric formulas of revelation.

Here, then, is a people so absorbed in its books, that it has forgotten the heavens above its head and the rest of the human race. For want of a tie with the infinite source of renewal, its life is worn out as soon as it commences, so that China is at once the oldest and youngest society in the world. Its distinctive trait is, that from its cradle it has represented rationalism in the East. Its god, without form or voice, is but the supreme heavens; the Void, but the void without either depth, or love, or hatred. The people are one; no castes, scarcely any traces of slavery, and up to a certain point no polygamy; but their god is without life, without personality, without soul. In the canonical books, amongst the words, warnings, councils of kings and sages, God never speaks or appears. Without preference, without inclination for any one, he is impartial as death; he has become in reality nothing but a political fiction placed at the head of the Constitution. Would you measure all that earth can do without heaven, life without immortality, man without God, study China.

Nothing being involved in such a religion, it neither progresses nor declines. Governments change, nowhere more; twenty-two dynasties have successively disappeared; but at the end of all these revolutions the primitive institutions of China remain immutable. In like manner, the West will be eternally condemned to turn Ixion-like on the revolutionary wheel, should the religious principle become similarly attenuated in Europe.

Six hundred years before the Christian era, the Emperors caused a collection of popular songs to be made. With the exception of a few words addressed furtively to the spirit, patron

of the family, of a cry in a moment of distress to the blue heavens, quickly followed by a sceptical reflection, or of a prayer to the void, these songs surprised on the lips of soldiers, labourers, and hirelings, discover no trace of a God who sees and tries the hearts of men. Each suffers, complains alone; without those cries of distress which rise from every condition of society, from the beggar to the emperor, finding any common centre. They resemble, if such a thing were possible, the Hebrew Psalms without Jehovah. They are the last efforts of Chinese poetry; wanting sacred wings, it fell to the ground as soon as it attempted to fly. Man cries out, God holds his peace, and the silence is eternal.[1]

These songs of the crowd, commented on by Confucius, make part of the liturgical books. The instinct of the artisan and the reflection of the thinker agree to leave God as small a place as possible in the ideas and business of mankind. The She-King is the ritual of a strong-minded people. The religion of reason provokes that of mysticism. Laou-tseu propagated on the borders of the Yellow River the Ascetic theories of the Ganges; Buddhism, expelled by the Brahmins, found a refuge in the indifference of China. But neither worship has given its society the form peculiar to it; when they appeared the state was already modelled on the literary dogma. Rationalism is the religion of China; positive faith the only heresy; the strong-minded man the only pope.

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[1] How true this is may be seen by reference to Dr. James Legge's "She-King, or the Book of Chinese Poetry." Dr. Legge, as all interested in the translation of the Bible into Chinese are aware, has been the advocate of the opinion that the Chinese had the idea of the true God, the One, Supreme Being, in opposition to Dr. Boone, the American Missionary Bishop in China, who denied that they had. Dr. Legge thinks that these poems abundantly confirm his conclusion. But *abundantly* is too strong a word. The few references to a Supreme Ruler are often under the vague title of Heaven; and if Shang-ti is sometimes credited with good dispositions towards men, he is as often spoken of in terms of the utmost bitterness, as thus:—

> "Great Heaven, unjust, the land exhausts with all these pains;
> Great Heaven, unkind, these woes upon it ceaseless rains.
> . . . . . .
> O Great unpitying Heaven, our troubles have no close!
> With every month they grow; men's minds know no repose,
> My heart with grief is drunk." . . . —P. 225, II. iv. vii.

Or again,—

> "Revere Heaven's changing moods with fear profound."
> —P. 320, III. ii. x.

It is not surprising after this to learn that these odes do not speak of the worship which was paid to God, unless it be incidentally.

The Chinese have founded their society outside God, and this is why they live outside the human race. Wanting a positive religion, they have been without the link by which the peoples are bound together. For all the different orders of civilisation have penetrated each other, uniting together more closely by a mutual interchange of beliefs; and the more a society has been full of God, the more it has been able to nourish other societies; whereas in those in which religion is reduced to a shadow, more than a shadow of relationship with the universal family is impossible. Thus we see Judæa and China equally isolated from the rest of mankind, equally removed from the orbit of the human race, yet how different their final influence on the world! Judæa draws all the greatest nations into the Abrahamic covenant, while China is powerless to form a single association. The reason is obvious: Shang-ti is a name without influence, while Jehovah is all in all to his people.

At the other end of the world a society is discovered whose principles are: Equality of all its members; intellect the sole ground of pre-eminence; personal merit the sole aristocracy. Everything there is regulated by the laws of human nature, its one great idol being good sense. But as soon as these marvels have aroused the admiration of the West, comes the discovery that this wonderful people neither moves, nor breathes, nor lives, and that all this wisdom has only ended by creating an automaton. Why is this? Because man is there deprived of an ideal superior to himself. Hebrew society gravitates towards Jehovah, Greek society towards Zeus, Christian society towards Christ, and in this effort towards heaven is the whole secret of social life. But in Chinese society, man having no object higher than himself, finds that he ends where he began.[1] Stifled within the narrow limits of humanity, this dwarf society has in everything lost its crown. Morality wants heroism; royalty, the royal muse; verse, poetry; philosophy, metaphysics; life, immortality; because above all God is wanting.

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[1] In the foregoing chapter it should be observed that Quinet does not deny that the Chinese have the idea of a Supreme Being. What he affirms is, that they entirely ignore it, and practically are atheists. But he nowhere says that they are so theoretically; on the contrary, he speaks of deism being as popular in China as pantheism in the rest of Asia, by which he probably means that while admitting the existence of God, they do not believe in his having any communion with men.

IV.

The Religions of Western Asia and of Egypt—The Revelation by the Word and by Organic Life.

Sec. 1.—*The Religion of the Persians.*

Modern travel has discovered the marvellous ruins of Persepolis, with their cuneiform inscriptions. But what increases the interest of these three thousand columns "that the genii have raised in the desert," are the bas-reliefs sculptured in the living rock, and from whence may be gathered not only the religious ceremonies, but the civil and political institutions of the Persians. A whole people appear defiling before their founder, Djemschid; magi, labourers, archers, artisans, each with the sign of his calling; we see the car of the migrations, and the little bell that still tinkles at the necks of the camels of Iran. Instead of the motionless empires of Brahma and Buddha, here is a society that has arisen, that has gone forth to meet its new God.

These Zend peoples have been restless from their cradle. A vague instinct impels them to conquer all around them, and to impose their faith on the world. Descending from the heights of the Bactrian, they precipitate themselves on the race of Shem, on Babylon, Chaldea, and the Assyrian Empire, never resting until they have subjugated all from the Indus to the Halys. Egypt added to the Persian Empire, they will attack Europe. What doctrines did they bring with them to Marathon, Salamis, Platææ, and Mycale? What god led them?

If, in addition to the monuments of Persepolis, we look at the Zend-Avesta, we shall find at first sight the same doctrines as those of the oldest Vedas. The Hindoos and the Persians have been twins in the same cradle, the latter having remained most faithful to the old tradition, neither transforming it by art nor philosophy, but, on the contrary, eternising it in a language which time has been unable to polish or corrupt. The Zend-Avesta is nothing but the revelation of the patriarchs of Upper Asia rendered into a liturgic system by the magi.

Djemschid marching at the head of his people, uttering to the mute world the sacred word, this is the first day's work of the Zend peoples; the second is the appearance of its prophet Zoroaster. On the summits of the Bactrian, before descending towards Persepolis, as the Hebrew people in the wilderness, it receives its teaching. There by Ardouisour, the spring of immortality, Zoroaster seeks divine instruction. No thunder

rolls as on Sinai, but a dialogue, unheard by any but the gushing spring, takes place between the Creator and the creature. This confidence shown to man by his Maker is one of the first characteristics of the Persian revelation.

The second is the necessity of praise. Man, in his ardent desire to celebrate the glory of creation, invokes every object in nature to assist, especially the firstborn of things. Nature to him is pure and holy, and he feels his own impurity in comparison. Why does the water, the tree, the fire tremble at his approach?

What existed in the beginning? asks the prophet. "Light and the uncreated Word," responds the voice from on high. Thus, in this Genesis, Light existed before creation. With regard to the power of speech—the Word, none have felt more deeply or more exalted its marvel. The Word is the light of Humanity as Light is the word of Nature. Can we be astonished that these Zend peoples should have identified the two, and, seeing the double miracle in themselves, should have made it the object of worship? For this luminous Word must have seemed to them not only a wonder of the moral but also of the physical world, since every living creature has its own language and its own rhythm. If the whole universe was, in fact, a word, an hosanna pronounced by the organ of things, must not this power of speech, this Word, be itself the principle, the soul of Creation? Each thing had been called into being, the world itself had arisen by the power of evocation. Pronounced by the Most High, this word of life, which is at the same time light, breaks forth, circulates through the infinite, from sphere to sphere, from mouth to mouth, and is repeated by all the archangels of heaven and of earth, until it reaches the lowest level in the hierarchy of beings, and is whispered in undertones by the spirits of the flowers, of the metallic ores, and the precious stones. This Word sustains the world; were it interrupted creation itself would fall to pieces. Therefore it is that the Persian people, associating itself with all nature, expresses this word in a liturgy by the mouth of the priest, calling upon all beings like a sentinel in the night, awaking them again at early dawn, and giving them in a manner the word for the day. Thence it is that the Zend-Avesta is composed chiefly of forms of evocation, and teaches not only that man should join his voice to the acclamation of the worlds, but that he should feed upon the sacred Word, making it his meat and his drink.

The reign of the Word and of uncreated Light has for its lord him who fulfils the order of heaven, the master of all wisdom, the artisan of all beauty, Ormuzd. But against him struggles another god, the author of all evil, the lord of darkness,

Ahriman. All creatures, all things follow one or the other, and the universe is a perpetual struggle between their contending forces. But the kingdom of light takes the initiative, and its rays are ever besieging the kingdom of darkness. This passionate struggle is repeated in the heart of man, and it extends far beyond the limits of this world; for every object in nature has its guardian angel, the least flower has a spirit which watches over it, even the dagger has one. All these spirits are engaged in deadly struggle in heavenly regions, the earthly fight has its counterpart in the skies.

In this battle, what side shall man take? Clearly, that of Light. Here then is the thought at the root of Persian History, the basis of its law, its Constitution, the ground and impetus of duty. To struggle for the Light, to make it triumph, is the end of man's existence, and explains how Indian asceticism is replaced by the spirit of conquest. This explains the deadly animosity of the Persians against the dark negro races of Egypt, who appeared to them the wicked race of Ahriman; this explains their crusades against the West under Xerxes and others. The frozen banks of the Danube, that cold sunless Thrace, must be wrested from the hands of the king of darkness for the pure and glorious Ormuzd. Read Herodotus, and you cannot understand the reason of their great invasion of Greece; study their religious dogma, the whole history is there.

A still closer tie existed between dogma and the state. As there were seven archangels round the King of light, there were seven satraps round the monarch, seven castes in the nation, seven walls around the holy city. Xenophon's "Cyropedia" is wanting in this, that he does not see that the education of the prince is regulated on the ideal of God. The least of his subjects must, like himself, prepare his heart for the rising, for the reign of Ormuzd. Every Persian soldier was to watch against the approach of his inner enemies, since his life must be pure as the flame; his future, his hope being, to become Light. What is "to live well" but to purify one's self? And this principle of private morality extends to the administration of nature, establishing obligations to things as to persons. Thus work became the first of rites, and we see how on this foundation was established that accord so much sought after in our days between Religion and Industry.

Have these ideas had no permanent value? Nothing in tradition has been more durable, is to-day more living. The stammerings of Persia broke into full utterance in Christianity: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God; in Him was life, and the life was the light of men."

Was the struggle between Light and Darkness to last for

ever? No, it only waited the advent of the mediator, Mithra, the third person of the Persian Trinity. Invested with a double nature, he comes to illuminate the god of darkness with his inward splendour. He converts him to the light. Ahriman purified, redeemed, is reconciled to Ormuzd, and unites with him to make an offering to the Eternal. Hell redeemed chants the Avesta. The resurrection of the dead and the regeneration of the universe close this great struggle. Guarded by the sacred dog, the souls who have passed the bridge Tchinevad are clothed in gold. Thus evil is only a shadow which glides over the surface of things, while that which is most original is that Satan himself is recovered from his fall, and the resurrection of matter governs that of the Spirit. Mithra, this labourer of the Desert, the son of the Word, closes the era of religious revolutions in Persia. Latest born of all the gods of the East, he is nearest in conception to the Christian tradition. So near that he bears the same names, has the same attributes as Jesus; for a time even it seemed a question whose worship should prevail. But as the Persian god paled in the East before the God of the Bible, Mithra paled in the West before the God of the Gospel. Nevertheless the conquered has left its traces everywhere in the triumphant religion, from the image of the tree of life in the garden of Eden, to the wise men from the East, with their offerings of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

To deify the principle of combat might suffice for the conquest of the world, but could not convert it. It needed in addition the principle of unity. It is true that above this struggle was the Being, the indivisible, impassible, incommunicable *Akêrêné*, but in the ardour of the warfare he was forgotten. Another result of this religion of struggle was that the combatants wore themselves out, and now the cities which resounded with the sacred word are the abodes of beasts of prey. Chased from their own land, the followers of Zoroaster have carried their religion back to India, the land of their fathers, and they present in the East the same miracle as the Jews in the West. At either end of the world these two peoples—the masters and the captives of Babylon, those who laughed and those who wept beneath its willows, magi and seers—exist, equally imperishable, equally miserable, equally obstinate in their resistance, the one to Christ, the other to Mahomet; and all the enmity of the world cannot unite two causes so alike in form but differing in God.

How hard it is for a religion to disappear! The immortal part of empires, the soul of civilisations, it will survive in a thought, or in a dogma, or perchance in a rite or an image which it has added to the profession of faith of the human race.

SEC. 2.—*The Religion of Egypt—Revelation by Organic Life.*

Some peoples appear to have had no infancy; the truth is, that every society is of the age of its beliefs. From Asia proceed a line of gods, each one less artless, more contemplative, wiser, sadder than its predecessor. They give to the states they adopt their character, that is to say, their age. Born of the dawn, they contract in the human spirit a taste for darkness, until, coming at last to bury themselves in mystery, they enter Egypt.

The thoughtful brow of its sphinx came from the East, its powerful loins from the deserts of Libya. Abyssinia and Ethiopia supply the heart and force of Egypt; from thence it incessantly renewed its life and drew its tropical rites. Its religion awakes at the source of the Nile, a colony of Oriental priests come to direct it, and from Meroë it follows the course of the river until it arrives at Thebes, Memphis, and the Delta. A temple marks each station, a city follows the temple. The surrounding tribes—red, black, white, copper-coloured, and tawny—flock in; each city forming an oasis in the desert, without reciprocal ties. A pastoral people invade this divided Egypt, and in the effort to expel them its mongrel population attains unity. This unity is established on the one common tie, the god to which they offer a common worship—the Nile. The soul of the river henceforth takes possession of them. Its mode of life, its destiny, is theirs. Once in the time of Sesostris they overflowed the world; then they retire into their bed, and eight centuries before the Christian era the national life of Egypt is already exhausted.

Egypt has not been unveiled to us, as India and Persia, by sacred books. It would seem as if Africa could not rise to the miracle of tradition by the word. Neither of the great empires of Carthage or Egypt have left any monument of the spoken word. Silence is the foundation of their religion. The Egyptian Bible is made of stone; its Old Testament is written on obelisks, pyramids, temples in granite.

The genius of Egypt could not rise to Light and Speech; the divine appeared to it in the heart of the hawk or the lion. Kneeling before the animal it sealed its own slavery, and as far as in it lay made Africa the nursing mother of servitude. Its animal worship extended beyond mere images; for in the temples were kept living creatures, crocodiles adorned with earrings and golden bracelets, lions covered with embroidered carpets, before whom incense was burnt, serpents fed with milk, and howling dogs. The African brought his gods from the desert, and the

priesthood adopted them all; and though the worship, thus formed gradually, rose with civilisation, it never denied its popular origin, for of its highest type was born the sphinx.

Thus the carnal soul of Africa took possession of the civilisation of the Pharaohs, the ferment of the deserts rose in the heart of the cities. To explain the principle of the Egyptian rites we must picture to ourselves Organic life at the time in which they commenced. How marvellous to man must that life have been as it swarmed beneath his feet and buzzed around him, appearing to spring without any parentage from the sacred dust. In the solitary place he met a being more powerful, wiser than himself, who reigned over the desert without a rival. To add to the mystery he could not interrogate the animals, for they were mute; yet they evidently possessed a secret knowledge, by which they perceived the coming of the seasons and the unknown paths of nature. The humble scarabæus, in putting on his golden suit, marked the approach of summer; the ibis walked with all the solemnity of a priest before the waters of the Nile, as if to show them the way. Besides, had not the animals reigned long before the coming of man; was not the lion king of the desert, the crocodile lord of the river, the eagle master of the sky? The poor slave must often have envied the wing of the bird or the hoof of the wild horse; as he saw the hawk hover over the highest pyramid and seat itself on its apex, he must have felt there was something divine in one so masterful and free. Could we forget what we owe to civilisation and to Christianity, we should quickly see how the permanent wonder of living nature in the midst of dead nature must have astonished the man alike naked in body and mind; how he must have been carried away at the sight of certain animals, believed by him to be gods or kings over the others. To have sought Revelation in organic life is the distinctive feature of Egypt.

This liturgy of the desert did not suffice for the priesthood, they crowned it by a system of dogma. The Egyptian Genesis, so often compared to the Hebrew, differed especially from it in this, that each day was an Incarnation, so that there are as many divine dynasties as epochs. A trinity appears: first the unrevealed Being, Jupiter Ammon, the ram of heavenly blue; then Athor, the mother, who holds on her knees and suckles the infant god, incarnate, under the figure of the new-born world. In every sanctuary is found, under divers names, this eternal family: Ammon, Osiris, Knef, the father; Mouth, Isis, Neith, the wife, the nurse, the mother; Orus, Khons, Malouli, the sacred child. Around this monstrous family prowls Typhon, the spirit of death, whose breath obscures the light and dries

up the waters. Incarnation, the universal doctrine of the East, appears in Egypt under the double figure of the Sun, and of the River in which it reflects itself. These two forces are, as it were, the Egyptian Messiah; their coming is looked for with hope, their departure is regarded with dismay. If the American Indian hears the voice of the Great Spirit in the cataract of Niagara, should not the Egyptians hear it in that river which, springing from unknown sources, was shaded by sacred obelisks, pyramids, and temples, and brought fertility and joy at every step in its course? All their theology and poetry is born of the waters of the Nile.

Only in countries where the sun appears in all its splendour is it possible to realise the mysterious pang with which nature seems smitten during the short winter. All flies away or dies. The sacred bird takes wing, the golden scarabæus disappears. No more murmurs, no more swarming, no more buzzing of living things; the universal languor that appears on the face of the world looks like the dying palor of a god fading away under the breath of the evil one. Seen by a people whose faith rested on the wonder of organic life, this sight evoked a passionate lamentation, sorrowful pilgrimages went from city to city, the priests striking their breasts, while the cry arose, "The god is dead." Man having taken to adoring nature, is alarmed at its decay. He can do nothing but celebrate the passion of his fainting god, of which the whole universe becomes the Golgotha. Egypt celebrated with the rest of the world the birthday of creation, but none beheld in so striking a manner as she did the picture of its death; thus the monuments which represent her the best are sepulchral. Like the desert, bare, empty, without entrance or exit, without sculptures, inscriptions, or any living images, what can have been the origin of the pyramids if they were not tombs for the gods?

From the very instability of its god, Egypt drew a part of its greatness and originality. In the moments of the divine weakness, man learnt to regard himself as something. The peculiar power of Egypt is shown in fitting this new-born sense of personality to the pantheism of the East. The Pharaohs place their own colossal statues in front of the temples, seat themselves amongst the gods, write their names on the sacred tree, and picturing the records of their reigns over the house of their gods, evidently make their own apotheosis. In further confirmation of this idea, comes the ritual for the dead. The Pharaohs spend their lives in making their tombs, and the poorest workman follows their example. Other peoples burn or offer their remains to beasts of prey, the Egyptian makes every effort to preserve his body as a pledge of his personality

in the kingdom of the dead. Not only does he believe in resurrection, but in judgment. Every soul is weighed against a feather by the god Atmou, and if found too light, sinks into the infernal regions; but if of good weight, it goes to bathe in the heavenly river, and to taste of the tree of life; and then passing, under the conduct of Hermes, through the labyrinth of forms, it rises again with the Eternal Sun in the pure dawn of Ammon.

This precocious instinct of individuality is the one point in which Egypt bears the palm over India and Persia. By this faith in the human personality, it has always remained the equal or the mistress of those who have conquered it, and not one of its conquerors have been able to make it alter its worship; on the contrary, it has imposed its dogmas upon them. Christianity alone has been able to dissolve this civilisation of granite. For its profound feeling of the instability of visible things, its worship of death, its passion of Osiris on the African Calvary, its legends written by Hermes on the tree of life, have all prepared it, more than any other part of the world, to receive the news of spiritual life and Christian immortality. So many of its great thoughts had been prophecies of the coming faith that nowhere was the change more rapid. The priests, who had stood out against all other religions, yield so easily that they disappear without leaving any trace of their last moments. In their place are suddenly seen the monks of the Thebaid. Who can be astonished if in the midst of so many relics of the religion of organic nature, when their eyes met everywhere gods with faces of lions or of wolves, these followers of St. Antony were assailed by frightful visions, or that they thought that they held converse with centaurs? In their inward struggles the Egyptian religion came to its end; in treading under foot the emblems of subjugated matter these holy men conquered a crown for the spirit. They are accused of giving the signal for social dissolution by cutting themselves off from the world; on the contrary, the thought that drove them into the desert was the very opposite to that of destruction; in place of a dead society they sought the type of every living one, of every living alliance, by a renewed communion with God. They entered again with Him into the social contract that had been broken. Whilst the human city was crumbling into dust, they imbibed in the contemplation of the Eternal City the spirit of the laws which could raise up ruined walls. The beginning of every society is marked by a similar concentration on the part of those who go to seek the new law in the desert. Moses on Sinai, Zoroaster on the Bordj, Manou on the Ganges, Orpheus in Thrace, what were they, if not the anchorites of the new-born

world, as Antony, Paul, Athanasius, were the anchorites of a world born again?

SEC. 3.—*The Principle of the Religions of Babylon and Phenicia —The Sentiment of the Infinite in Pagan Love.*

Babylon inherits the religion of the shepherds of Upper Asia, but that which amongst them was inspiration has here become science, observation, calculation. The heavens are reduced to a system, a radiant society, which has its hierarchy, its satraps, its despot. The stars are formed into constellations which pour out good and evil on the world; interpreters of the invisible light, the planets discover the future; over the whole celestial universe is the God of Light, who here appears under the name of Bel. It is evident that this religion is an individual rite of the primitive worship of Light, but in regarding Light under the form of stars it sanctions the worship of images in the temples; a characteristic which divides it sharply from the wholly spiritual worship of the Zend-Avesta, the true Protestantism of the East; and is the cause of the religious wars between Persia and Assyria. Besides this, the gods have passed from infancy to youth. Desire has been born, the earth has lost its primitive innocence. The universe, which in the early Vedas has, so to speak, no distinct expression, is full of ardent thoughts. The ancient night, sleeping under the cold gleams of the Asvenau, has become amorous of the caresses of the day. The Dawn of the Rig-Veda has become a nubile virgin seeking her eternal lover. This ardour of a youthful world manifests itself in the voluptuous cry which rises from Babylon, where the espousals of Nature with the Sun are celebrated in rites unveiling the mysteries of childbirth and maternity. Seated on a shaggy lion, wearing a diadem of towers on her head, and a necklace of precious stones shining with the light of the stars, the courtisan of the universe dashes here and there, sowing everywhere in the season of life that cruel voluptuousness which devours it. Commerce opens up her way; at the end of each of its great roads a temple is dedicated to her worship—Mylitta and Thammuz at Babylon, Astarte and Adonis in Phenicia, Cybele and Attis in Phrygia—always the same couple, the marriage of heaven and earth. The feast of the conception of the mother of all things at the approach of summer, the grief for the sun lost in winter, refound in spring, buried and risen again, are celebrated by rites frightful or polluting. The Babylonian commerce in articles of luxury was itself a sort of religious rite by which the bosom of the earth was adorned. The Phe-

nicians, in carrying the Tyrian purple from shore to shore, beautified the robe of the great mother of the mountains; and those maritime cities, Tyre, Sidon, Carthage, Smyrna, were as so many officiating priests continually employed in adorning, repairing, embroidering the hem of her garments; so that, in many respects, the industrial arts were only a consequence of this worship. Babylon was the insatiable heart of this worship; from thence it enclosed all the societies of Western Asia, Phenicia, Phrygia, Lydia, Canaan, consuming them in its embraces until it left them nothing but names.

Divinity thus represented gave to woman a certain emancipation. Instead of being shut up in her apartments, she enjoyed a horrible liberty. Semiramis, Dido, Stratonice, Athalia, Artemisia, Cleopatra, appear on their thrones, representatives of the Eternal Astarte.

It is this which made the path to idolatry so slippery in Judæa. Solomon and the kings of Israel, in wishing to unite the worship of Jehovah and Astarte, had no intention to deny the worship of the former; they thought to complete it. But the God of Joseph persistently refused such corruption. He would have no other bride than the mystic church.

Terror, respect, delight, every childlike sentiment worn out, man is smitten with a delirious love of the infinite. He cannot resist it. Desire for the foolish Virgin, who lives and breathes in all things, has broken loose. Tired ere long of her cold form in the temples, it would possess her living and palpitating. With haggard eyes it rushes forth seized with madness, and in wild spots forms choirs of Corybantes, Curètes, Dactyles, who, from retreat to retreat, seek the great ancestor of the hills, ever mother, ever virgin. To the sound of sackbut and Phrygian flute, it explores with flaming torches the depths of the caverns to see if she sleeps there. Her perfumes rise from the sacred woods, it feels her moving among the flowers. It ascends the highest peaks, it descends the lowest valleys. Evoë! evoë! and then, when the sigh of the ocean is its only answer, it mingles despair with its voluptuousness at not being able to overtake its infinite deceiver. It exhausts this cup of its orgies, its thirst increases, it cuts its body with frightful scars, ever following the great amorous Madonna, who is ever disrobing herself at the extremity of the horizon, as she rushes along in her car drawn by roaring lions. Never does it cease until the day beholds her arise under the purified heavens of Syria as the immaculate Virgin of Christendom.

V.

The Hebrew Religion.

Sec. 1.—*Jehovah—Revelation through the Desert.*

We now open the book that contains whatever is vital in every other book in Asia; the book that, recalling them all, is opposed to them all; doing away with them at the same time that it consecrates them. Regarded solely from a human point of view, this is the miracle most visibly written upon every page of the Bible.

For half a century the text of the Old Testament has been examined more closely than ever. Germany has undertaken this task. The spirit of man wishes at last to see clearly into the book of God. Taking it up again and again, he weighs every syllable; never has so rude an assault been made on the letter. If we were to consult appearances, all is irrevocably changed by the discoveries of criticism. But if, after our first surprise, we examine the results, we find them so mixed with hypothesis and conjecture that we despair of founding anything yet on such a basis.

In substituting everywhere, for instance, the vague action of time for personal influence, has it been sufficiently considered that such a system, which is applicable to peoples in which the man disappears in the caste, is in nearly continual contradiction to the genius of all others? Their past is not formed by hereditary dynasties, but by individuals. We might as well cut the Hebrew people out of history as try to get rid of the personality of Moses. Of what consequence is it to prove Moses not to be the author of certain laws and narratives, if he is left in full possession of the idea of Jehovah, in which after all consists the miracle of his life? What is gained by making the theocracy commence after the destruction of Jerusalem, if its doctrines are not disputed? Let them date from Egypt or Babylon, are they any the less extraordinary on that account? Regulate, change at your will the chronology of the Hebrews, it is impossible to deny that one and the same genius reigns through all the books, and that it is this genius alone which makes all the difficulty.

Admitting that the religions of Asia have drawn their light from the same source; admitting that the same fundamental dogma, that of the Trinity, appears in each of the religions of the East, the difficulty is to find the tie that unites that of Judæa with the rest. Raise the gods of Phenicia or of Egypt as much as you like, you can never make them attain to the

idea of Jehovah. Why is this? Because incarnate in the universe they are one with it, because the earth forms their feet, the sky their head, the stars their glance; while nature is not even a robe for Jehovah; he can remake it or destroy it, just as it pleases him. The winds are not his breath, they are his messengers. The stars are not his eyes, they are his servants. The world is not his image; it is not his echo; it is not his dress; it is not his light; it is not his word. What is it then? It is nothing before him.

To find a solid alliance with Jehovah we must go back to the origin of the religions of Asia, to the first divinity, mysterious, impenetrable, the source of all others, the Brahma of the Hindoos, the Zervan-Akerene of the Persians, the ancient of days, without wife, without son, without family. But in the other religions this great Solitary is scarcely seen; quickly incarnating himself, he sinks and disappears under the form of the world, exhausting his divinity in imparting it to all. Jehovah, on the contrary, so accumulates all his divinity into himself, that that Trinity, which is at the bottom of all other religions, is veiled and, as it were, buried in his.

It is in the splendour of the first dawn of the religion of uncreated Light, with gods who, like Indra and Ormuzd, rise above creation and look down upon it, that his alliance shines forth. By light Jehovah reveals himself to Abraham, to Moses, to the people, to Solomon, to Elijah; so from age to age with increasing glory he shines, until he is seen by Isaiah, Ezekiel, seated on his flaming throne. It was because Baal and Astarte were the incarnations of *material* light that their rivalry was so dangerous. And this danger was increased by the fact that some of the ornaments of Solomon's temple were borrowed from that of the Sun. For every sacred thing in the East, as it comes in contact with Jehovah, is assimilated and purified at his shrine. Converting all that he touches, his originality and his personality are never more strikingly seen than in these divine reavings.

And yet, in reality, what an insuperable barrier he extends around himself; how he separates himself from all, at the very time that he is connecting himself with all! Instead of revealing himself in the midst of tropical nature, where all provokes to idolatry, he chooses the desert. Nature had been adored so long that it was necessary that a people should be led where nature was not, if they were to learn to worship a God who was above nature. In the desert the universe has disappeared; no river nor spring to adore, no wood nor metal to make an image; not even a voice save that of thunder; but everywhere the face of Jehovah shining alone in the void of immensity, the Spirit standing alone in the midst of His invisible temple. This is the

reason of the withdrawal of the Hebrew people into the wilderness of the Wandering. There Humanity gathers itself up; in the midst of the silence of the universe the miracle of the God-Spirit consummates itself in its heart. In vain criticism lays hold of numerous contradictions to affirm that the migration from Egypt is nothing but an allegory without any real foundation. The desert is imprinted in ineffaceable characters in every institution; and its majesty, nakedness, and immensity is even to be seen in the temperament of the God of the Hebrews. The rough tracks of these valleys of hyssop, the slag of these dreadful rocks, the menaces of this land of anger, all reflect themselves in his face. Terror is his law, to behold him is to die; all other gods have temples, he alone is wandering, without dwelling-place. He is not willing to stop anywhere, or to take the form of any place; he is not the god of the mountain nor the valley, he is nomadic as the Spirit who dwells everywhere at the same moment. It is only when his image is completed in the understandings of men, and can no more be veiled by the image of the world, that he consents to enter a temple. The seed of life roots itself, and the kingdom of Judah begins to germinate. And when that kingdom finally disappears, in order that the world may be constrained to take its place and follow Jehovah, he enters again into the same solitudes. The Christ before revealing himself, for forty days followed the traces of his Father in the desert.

In the world are two visible figures of Eternity, the Ocean and the Desert. Each has left its imprint on the genius of the Religions. The changing gods of India have arisen from the capricious and tumultuous Ocean; the Desert, without voice, without succession, without apparent form, can never reveal any other than the God-Spirit, immutable, inexorable, incorruptible as itself.

SEC. 2.—*The Prophets.*

Since it had been by the mixture of races that those religious confusions had taken place out of which had grown the divisions of polytheism, it was necessary in order to preserve the pure gold of tradition: the doctrine of the Unity of God, that there should be one people who dwell unallied with the human race. Convinced that no union was possible between their religion and the rest of the East, the Hebrew leaders never sought to convert. Wherever they came they made a desert around them; it was their calling to live alone on the earth and in time, as their God lived alone in heaven and in eternity.

In this solitude the Hebrew people was always burdened by

the great secret that it alone in the universe possessed; it knew itself to be the confidant of the Eternal, it listened to his invisible messages; it underwent all the magic and witchery of solitude; a voice declared that it carried the future in its bosom, that its highest worth lay in its destiny. Tormented unconsciously by this work of the future, it was at once proud and dejected; prophecy being ever the dominant tone of its poetry and of its worship.

In the pantheistic religions there are no prophets. All generations confuse with rather than succeed each other. Even in Persia and Egypt oracles and soothsayers do little better than mutter. It is only among the Hebrews that the genius of the future discovers itself, for their God is free: he wills, he changes, he destroys, he is angry, he is appeased. That which has been, ceases to be the invariable rule of that which will be. With the divine personality the miracle of liberty is discovered in the world, old institutions give way, the future as a closed book is opened, man seizes on it, and eagerly peruses it.

Hence the image of a people who, rejecting an odious present, live always outside of it in an effort after the impossible. Its constitution rests on a double priesthood: that of the tribe of Levi, possessing many traits in common with the priesthood of the rest of the East; and that of the seers, personal, spontaneous, drawing their authority from within themselves. Tribunes of the people of God, it is their mission to arouse the hereditary priesthood always ready to go to sleep on the forms of the past; they keep the idea of Jehovah incorrupt, they purify and spiritualise His worship from generation to generation, diffusing incessantly a new soul into the ancient rites. Always possessing a profound understanding of the times in which they lived, they were the first in antiquity to perceive that the old East was dead. From the height of the idea of Divine Unity, as from some lofty watch-tower, they overlook the whole horizon of antiquity; they see the old religious systems which surround them falling to ruin, and with them the societies, the empires, the states they are sustaining. In religious history, they read civil and political history; the death of the gods taught them in advance the death of the peoples. When no temple had as yet tottered, when the priesthoods were still enjoying peace, strange voices interrupt the silence! *Prophesy against Babylon!* Ere long the empire of the Medes comes out of its obscurity, comes at the time named to subjugate Babylon. *Prophesy against Egypt!* Cambyses is in his cradle; he becomes king, he invades Egypt, and causes the bones of the Pharaohs to be beaten with rods. *Prophesy against Damascus, against Ephraim!* As a matter of fact, these kingdoms are

carried away like birds'-nests by the Chaldean fowler. Each word seems to be a judgment of God, so quick is its execution.

But the prophets mainly occupy themselves with their own people. They appear just when its independence is most in peril, each having an individuality of his own and bearing a particular message, but all agreeing in the same thought, the same politics, the same fear. In face of the East united against Israel, they invoke in heaven the unity of God, on earth the unity of the people, the fraternity of Ephraim and Judah, the unity of the government by the alliance of the priesthood, and the monarchy in the bosom of the theocracy. They are distracted between two thoughts: if they look at their scattered tribes at the feet of the colossi of Assyria or Persia, nothing appears but distress, signs of ruin, tears, cries, despair, and grief unexampled; for they foresee the dispersion and the inevitable ruin of Judæa, the sanctuary of the future. When, however, they consider what idea the Hebrew people represent, they feel, in looking up to Jehovah, that on their side is invincible force, so that in their extremest distress they never suppose it possible that the people who have been made the living temple of God can perish; to do so would be to admit the defeat of the Eternal. Thus every time they rose to this idea despair ceased; far from fearing, they menaced their enemies, and lifting their nation from the dust, they sang its ultimate triumph. This mixture of sorrow and of joy, of all that is most feeble—Judæa, with all that is most powerful—Jehovah; this dialogue of the infinitely little and the infinitely great, is quite peculiar to the Hebrew genius.

And these ideas belong not only to the seers; they are those of the entire people, who may be considered in the course of its life as a single prophet living from the times of Moses to those of the Maccabees. Even in exile, under the lash of Chaldean archers, when Israel is dragged away, his hands tied behind him, he goes, led by a sacred dream; in vain he tramps barefooted over the sands of the desert, nothing can awake him out of it. All the while he is descending the bitter steps of slavery, he believes he is mounting the throne of the world; for the possession of such an idea as Jehovah is alone sufficient to invest him with a royalty which nothing can abolish.

Far from being mere Hebrew tribunes, or men whose thoughts are confined to a city or to a race, the Hebrew prophets are, as tradition has called them, God's spokesmen, who read the future where it forms itself, in God Himself. From their point of view every horizon of history is to be seen; they do not merely prophesy a series of accidents and events, as the Greek oracles, but announce a social change, a new humanity. The

reign of David is for them the golden age, which they extend through the whole future. With the restoration of this ideal reign they see the unity of God taking possession of the earth, and this idea repairing the old world. It is in this sense that it has been rightly said that there is more than one republic of Plato in a single chapter of Isaiah.

As a matter of fact, are not the prophecies accomplished? Has not the unity of the Elohim triumphed? Has not Jehovah, enslaved in Babylon, conquered the god of Babylon? Has not the fraternity of the peoples succeeded to their enmity? Did not the Old Testament implicitly contain the New, as the bud the flower? And if these things are yet incomplete, does not each man unconsciously work for the re-establishment of the kingdom of David according to the divine plan perceived in the beginning by these divine men? For all the thoughts of God as well as his works are enveloped in one supreme thought; and the men who have been the first to possess this idea, have really possessed the science of all times and of all forms to come. After the return from captivity the power of prophecy vanishes. It reaches its greatest height during the time of slavery; it passes away when the Jews consent to exist under protection. Henceforth its teachers drop into the didactic tone. Instead of the prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel come the proverbs of the Preacher.

SEC. 3.—*The Principle of Hebrew Poetry—The Psalms.*

In the sacred books of the East creation continues indefinitely. In the Old Testament, Elohim creates the universe by a flash of his will; he places it far from himself, he sits down beyond it in the skies. Hence a totally different poetry from the Indian epics; a poetry rapid, instantaneous, like the God it celebrates.

Where the Creator is distinct from his work, every change gives the impression of an extraordinary intervention of his will; whence the idea of prodigy. Born at the same time as that of divine liberty, it arouses enthusiasm, transport, thanksgiving; and the psalm, which is the epitome of all these sentiments, is the true poetry of miracle. The language of the Psalms has the peculiar character, the very accent, of Jehovah; all is movement, life, personality; attributes become beings, beings actions, differences of time are scarcely marked, the present being almost entirely wanting in the verbs, appearing as an indiscernable point between the past and the future. Echo of generations, these sacred songs belong to nearly every epoch of Hebrew history from Moses to the Maccabees. Most numerous under David, the psalms of that period gave the tone to

all the rest: at first, during the unity of the monarchy and the priesthood, full of the confidence of the Lord's anointed, they are calm and majestic; during the Captivity they have a heart-rending accent; then enthusiasm bursts forth afresh with the Return into a style more liturgic than under the first temple. As this poetry grows with him, the image of the Ruler of Israel sitting down on the holy hill by the side of his God is more and more idealised, until it becomes the image of every hope and the permanent emblem of the future. Thus this grand triumphant choir goes on alike in peace or war, increasing, resounding as long as the Hebrew people endure, and only finishing with them; marking by its rhythm the pulsation of life through the whole course of generations. Sometimes the accord of the voices breaks and seems lost in the sands; then the echo is heard beneath the willows of the Captivity; sometimes but a single voice moans in the night—a newly-anointed king, a prophet, a shepherd, a Levite forgotten among the ruins; the rest of Judah seems lost, the concert finished. But the song of triumph never fails to recur, the liturgic choir bursts out afresh; the mute people come out of the dust, the image of the ideal king appears resplendent, the gate of the City of God reopens, and one hardly knows whether one is beholding the triumph of the past or of the future.

In the midst of these exalted sentiments are others which find expression nowhere else in the world,—the secret hopes, the painful thoughts, the miseries which are at the depths of the inner life, all hidden beneath the majesty of a king of Judah; for the personality of man shines forth with that of God. Elsewhere the divinities do not trouble themselves with the private thoughts which wander in the darkness of men's spirits. It was not permissible to invoke the Immortals. Here, on the contrary, is a God who dwells beyond all worlds, yet hears the muttered complaints at the bottom of men's hearts. He traverses immensity, he comes to lend an ear, to make his creature enter into intimacy with the Infinite. He is the Father, Israel the Son; terrible paternity, it is true, without the Virgin and the mother; chastisement does not spare the child.

At intervals the psalms seem to recall reminiscences of the Rig-Veda, but the Hebrew poetry is very far from the early rudeness of these Indian hymns; if it belongs to comparatively modern society, it has many traits of tribal infancy; it has found, for instance, no poetic artifice beyond repeating the same idea twice. But if its clothing is rustic, its heart and soul are loyal; and tradition has done well in crowning the name of David with this poetry, which displays at once all the characteristics of the shepherd and the king.

SEC. 4.—*Hebrew Philosophy—Job.*

Directly the unity of God was proclaimed, the question at once arose: If He is alone, whence comes evil? If He is master, why do the good suffer? If all hearts are in His hands, why do the evil triumph? The Hebrew people were bound to seek its solution. The book of Job is an attempt to do so. It belongs to the system of the Bible as reply to query; blasphemy is here the demonstration of the faith.

Founded on an ancient tradition, though not an historic work, this book of Job, the most poetic of all the books in the Bible, opens in heaven. Satan, still permitted to come into the presence of God, appears among his familiar angels, and proposes the temptation of the most just man on earth. Job is suddenly struck. A powerful prince, he is laid low in the dust. He has never done aught but good, and yet he suffers,—suffers bitterly. Why is this? Thus he arraigns God. One step more and doubt comes, but it is doubt mixed with hymn, with adoration. Some have found in these contradictions proof that the book was written at different epochs; no, it is the heart of Job that is divided, not the poem. He is terrified at his own thoughts; before entering farther into the way of scepticism, he would return, but he cannot; he has set out in a way from which there is no issue. Under the goad of despair, under the sting of injustice, he plunges sometimes into faith, sometimes into doubt. He prays and adores at the same time that he denies and blasphemes. In these violent struggles his soul breaks far away from the old Mosaic law; its inward storms impel it at times to pass right through Christianity itself. In no other work bearing the character of a sacred oracle has moral torture been thus strikingly depicted. That which renders it more touching is that Job's friends, shut up in the spirit of the old law, do not understand the quite divine furies of a soul that despair has rendered prophetic. These pharisees in the presence of the Christ of the Old Testament can only comprehend the past. As the whole question turns on the existence of evil, they begin by denying the fact altogether. When Job displays his wounds they prove that they are just, he is guilty of a hidden crime. With the sentiment of his integrity, Job loses faith in himself, in the world, in God; but in this moral agony, when he is on the point of falling into the profoundest depths of the abyss, suddenly, as by some inward miracle, he catches sight of the hope of immortality. Eternal life, resurrection; these words, which had never been pronounced before, shine out in this moral tempest as a flash of light through the darkest

night. The light vanishes, only to make night and the abyss more profound; for the friends entrench themselves in sublime commonplace, eulogising the order of the universe and its immutable laws. What does it matter that the heavens are well ordered if confusion reigns in the heart? Tired of arguing with men whose reason seems to totter and to fly before the truth, Job would enter into the lists with God himself, triumphing bitterly as, with the logic of despair, his words sum up all the difficulty in the question: Why then do the wicked live? why are they advanced and strengthened with riches?

The friends are reduced to silence, the clouds open; the Eternal himself descends to plead his cause against Job. He will have nothing to do with the friends, he rejects their superannuated wisdom; he prefers the delirious impiety of Job because it is full of the God of the future, and comes from a heart torn by a superabundance of life. But he does not really argue with Job; the sufferer is conquered, but not by persuasion; he holds his peace, dazzled by the torrent of Eternal splendour. Had he been able to stand up, he might have replied by innumerable questions, all insoluble under the old law. Christian immortality alone could give any satisfactory answer. How could the acquisition of new flocks, the birth of new children, balance the loss of the others? Job must possess the heaven of the Gospel, he must see his sons before him in the kingdom where there are no more contradictions, no more evil men, no more ruins; a few years of earthly happiness could not cure his wounds, for they were infinite. Only when the evil is entirely repaired, the injustice fully corrected, could Job be satisfied. As the drama of "Prometheus" has no possible *dénouement* except in Christianity, so it is with the book of Job. What makes this poem so grand is, that it goes beyond the Old Testament, it necessitates a new heaven. It is this, too, which makes it so pathetic, for these despairing cries will find no answer except in another society. Christianity lies at the bottom of the blasphemy, it dawns in the deep night of pharisaism. The poet is straitened in sacred antiquity, he stretches out his hands to the future, he embraces only despair. Moses puts the question, Job discusses it, Christ alone resolves it.

The other religions of the East are each a definite system complete in themselves; Mosaism is only the first period of a religion which expects to be consummated by a new law. The Old Testament is full of difficult questions which the New alone answers. In the one we seem wandering in the desert, always sublime, but of which we cannot see the issue; all is grand, frightfully grand; thought rises, wavers, darts forward as if it would seize the future: in the other all is calm, all is conse-

cutive; man has found what he sought, the disquiet of the spirit has disappeared, the system is finished; peace, companion of order, breathes in everything.

To suppose that Moses wrote this poem would be to suppose that scepticism broke out at the same time as revelation, and such a scepticism as Job's, which presupposes disastrous experiences. No, this philosophy belongs to a ripe age in the history of the Hebrew people, if not to its decline. It is true that it is not the last word of scepticism. If it took several centuries to fall from Moses to Job, perhaps it took as many to fall from Job to Ecclesiastes. Here revolt has ceased, imprecation is extinct, there is every mark of the irreparable doubt of a worn-out old age. Where is the prophetic spirit? Not a spark lives under the livid cinder; life and hope are dried up. So many ardent wishes have been deceived, so many attempts frustrated, that desire has failed, nothing remains but disgust with heaven and earth. When after all this marvellous history, this way of miracle, this search after the promised land, after so much enthusiasm, after sorrows, triumphs, exiles so heroically borne in the thought of the future kingdom, the outcome of all is: Vanity of vanity, all is vanity; there is nothing new under the sun; it would seem that the *Consummatum est* of the Old Testament is reached; that Jehovah himself must have his cross, and disappear buried in this death of thought. The East is sinking, falling in upon itself. The Old Law is passing away, when will the New come?

SEC. 5.—*Continuation—Comparison of Oriental with General Scepticism.*

The thoughts unchained by Job sleep no more. Scarcely closed, the abyss reopens, the discussion begins again. The issue is delayed; about to appear, it is adjourned to eternity.

The Greek genius is the first to take up the question debated by the Hebrew. The Prometheus of Æschylus has some points of resemblance to Job. As the patriarch of Uz, Prometheus has done well: he has given men speech; justice, the celestial arts: for this he is persecuted by Jupiter, and chained to a rock. Who is this Titan that he should struggle with the wisdom of the Olympian gods? He must submit; on that condition alone the torture will cease. So far the resemblance, but here the two dramas separate. In the utmost madness of grief Job is always subdued by the thought of Jehovah; he never ceases to humiliate himself before his supreme majesty. In Greece human pride goes a step farther. Prometheus may be delivered if he will

only show a sign of regret; Hermes comes himself to beseech him to give up his resistance. But he will not; Prometheus braves the whole host of Olympus, and prophesies their fall. Even when they pour their united thunder on the head of the Titan, he pursues them with his execrations. This implacable revolt of Athenian poetry shows what a step man had made in the religious revolution. What in reality is this figure of Prometheus if not the image of the Hellenic spirit repelling for ever the dynasties of the Oriental gods? The religions of nature are about to fall under the blasphemy of philosophy. Nothing can ever make the Greek genius, that true Titan, enter again under the ancient yoke.

In the Hamlet of Shakespeare the enigma is the same as it is in Job and Prometheus, while all the circumstances are different. Among feudal castles, in a Catholic graveyard, under Northern skies, side by side with a powerful religion, is a man who doubts, denies, suffers. The bad are triumphant, iniquity is crowned on the throne of Denmark, and the abyss opening, he asks the old question: "Why then do the wicked live?" The answer now is a cold sarcasm, a thousand times worse than the imprecations of Job and Prometheus. Scepticism of the heart has given birth in Hamlet to scepticism of the spirit; it is this which renders it irremediable; and I know nothing more profound than to have made absolute doubt depend on the necessity of doubting one's mother. After the secret revealed in the graveyard, all belief perishes in the young prince. If his mother is a poisoner, in what man, woman, or sentiment can he trust? He disbelieves the sight of his own eyes. A phantom wandering among the ruins of the human intelligence is all that remains of Hamlet. He passes through the same tortures as Job and Prometheus, but he has none of their antique violence; he feels the serpent in his heart, and it is cold. He does not cover his despair with the magnificent symbols of the East, nor the correct figures of Greece; his evil is too profound; he jests about it. Instead of struggling with sovereign justice, he counterfeits madness; and he succeeds so well because, in reality, his reason is half gone. It loses itself, seeks itself, finds itself again, only to lose itself anew; you see a great soul divided between reason and incipient madness, without knowing which will in the end prevail. Hamlet has looked down into the abyss unknown to the ancients, he has had a glimpse of the kingdom of the dead; it has made his intellect reel, and if his life is not cut short by some mischance, there can be no end for him but intellectual death. This makes the drama incomparably more hopeless than either Job or Prometheus. What makes Hamlet's fall so frightful is that his point of departure is from the beliefs

most commonly held among Christians in his day. He represents at the opening of the modern world the society of the Middle Age, still young in appearance but already old in heart.

Can man go farther in sceptical poetry? In the midst of Catholic skies, Satan proposes to God to tempt the man who by his intelligence is nearest the supreme truth. Thus the preamble of Faust resembles that of Job. He is not, however, like the patriarch, one who draws his strength from his virtue. He is great by intelligence, a learned doctor, wise as modern society. He has studied every science; still he is confronted with the same fatal questions that Job met in the desert, under the light of the stars of Asia. It is not only the thirst for knowledge which devours Faust; he wishes in his pride to possess the secret of things, in order that he may become God himself. His books are mute, science has deceived him; he will reject science, he will trust to means disavowed by reason, to feverish imaginations; he will abandon himself to magic. In the solitude of the night he evokes the spirit of the worlds. Constrained to bow his head before the splendour of spirit, he determines to free himself from the bonds of material existence; his suicidal purpose is arrested by the sound of the Easter bells. Their melody falls like dew on his sepulchral soul. He renounces the poison, but the holy impression does not last. A belief in hell is the only tie between Faust and religion. What are all the blasphemies of the past compared with this last cry? Cursed be belief! cursed be hope! cursed be patience! Science, nature, religion, even the taste of death, have all been experienced. Nothing remains but to traverse the regions of death itself by the suicide of the soul and the conscience. Faust makes a compact beyond the tomb with Satan himself. Finally he alienates his reason and his will; and the infernal spirits celebrate this last act of the tragedy, Faust drinking the hell-draught to its last drop.

The human race is to-day a great teacher, admiring itself in its books, adoring itself in its works, and trusting only in itself. At times, however, this pretended divinity is troubled, meeting with voids it cannot fill. Full of feverish life, it puts to its lips in place of the poison phial that scepticism which it can neither reject nor accept; and cries of disordered grief escape the bosom of the new god at the very moment that it is crowning itself with its own hands.

The life of the human race in its moments of trial can be summed up in these principal figures: Job, Prometheus, Hamlet, Faust. We have in them the whole history of the heart of man fighting with religion. It is easy to see that in each book scepticism becomes harder and harder, and that each presents an

alternative in the struggle between the wisdom of man and the wisdom of God. But whatever may be the sadness or even the disorder of these poems, we all take the deepest interest in them. We love to follow these proud intelligences into the abysses into which they have fallen; we would call to them, and would ask them what they have found, or heard, or perceived in those unfathomable regions. But our voices only repeat themselves; and the echoes of the great minds of the Hebrew prophets, of Æschylus, of Shakespeare, as they return one upon the other, enable us to form some idea of the profundity of the problems in which they have been engulphed. And yet all scepticism is not sterile. There is a fruitful doubt, as there is a fruitful grief; for doubt is an instrument of the truth, and this is the reason why it is indestructible.

SEC. 6.—*Slavery in its Relations with the Eastern Religions.*

To grasp the ultimate consequences of Oriental dogma we must descend to the lowest level of life in the East, and there in every city we shall find a man who, like the stone colossus that supports the frieze of a temple, bears on his shoulders the whole burden of society. Excluded from the principal rites of religion, outside God and humanity—empires, institutions change; his condition alone remains unalterable. The slave can neither live nor die.

To Montaigne, who assigns Tyranny and Climate as the prime causes of Slavery, it is easy to reply that the republics of Greece were founded on it, and that it existed in the North as well as the South. Rousseau, following Hobbes and the ancient legists, ascribes it to war. But here again we remark that, led by a false etymology, the holders of this opinion stop at a fact which was often its immediate cause, without going back to the principle which would explain its general sanction and the cause of its universal distribution.

As there is no polytheism without slavery, there must be a certain relation between them. The more attentively paganism is examined the more sure it becomes that slavery was a component part of it. After admitting the existence of slave gods, it is not astonishing that the Oriental and Greek peoples should regard the natural inequalities of men as making one man by divine right the slave of the other.

How could they escape slavery when it was consecrated by dogma? At the highest point in the polytheistic heavens sat Osiris or Jupiter like a Pharaoh or Agamemnon; below this master an oligarchy of great idle gods, immortal satraps or

patricians, who thought their tasks accomplished when they breathed the incense or drank the ambrosial cup; at their feet a people of inferior demons, who consumed themselves in sterile works far from the light of day. Titans bound in fetters and shut up in darkness; heavenly galley-slaves, who tug the planets in their cars; Cyclops, who forge day and night the burning arrows of the Sun; Telchines, who polished the metals and repaired the worn-out earth. In all these indefatigable workers, hidden in the interior of the earth, in the folds of the clouds, in the grottoes of the seas, always bowed down at their work, without joy or repose, have we not the divine plebeian, who has no other right but sorrow without remedy, labour without pay, and with no hope of emancipation?

One of the worst features of primitive slavery is that the slave does not himself complain or think his fate unjust. Why should he expect an enfranchisement refused to immortals? The workman could not be less resigned than the Cyclops, the boatman of the Nile than the pilot of the bark of Osiris, the shepherd than the wandering faun. Moreover, what could the philosopher say against an institution which could not cease or be modified without everything else falling with it? Polytheism, slavery, the one engendered the other; the society which accepted the first was condemned to maintain the second.

To abolish slavery, then, it was necessary to begin by abolishing the old heavens. Only when God was restored to his full independence, to his full liberty in the recognition of his indivisibility and unity, could man attain his freedom and unity. Then not only the principle of castes disappears, but servitude loses its sanction. It may continue to exist under disguised forms, but its foundation is ruined.

Thus it is that in the degree any Eastern nation escapes from polytheism, in that degree they get rid of slavery. By the law of Moses no Hebrew could lose his liberty for more than six years, a regulation which rendered it impossible to enslave the people. If this commandment, which goes back to Exodus, and recurs in Deuteronomy and in the Prophets, was not always obeyed to the letter, it was nevertheless the ideal which dominated the whole Hebrew legislation. The spirit of equality was rooted in the Law; where can you find a more striking contradiction to the spirit of antiquity than when the legislator says: "Remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee"? From the hour that the Hebrew people considered itself the property of Jehovah it could not sell itself into the hands of any other master.

If for a moment we compare the modern with the old East, we see in place of the Hebrew God an abstract God, free from

any national tie; his people one by belief rather than by origin. His wrath gathering slowly for ages, is at last poured out not only on the land of Canaan, but far over the East; the sword is his instrument. Who would not imagine that out of this sacred war would come monstrous inequality; at least a system of castes worse than that of antiquity? On the contrary, it only serves to abolish the principle of slavery wherever it comes. The rapidity of the Mohammedan conquests is explained by the civil equality promised to the converted. Never had religious unity been more absolute, never had there existed a civil order with fewer civil privileges of race or birth: even that remnant of caste which Moses maintained in the tribe of Levi, disappeared beneath the level of Mahomet. Nor was this all; Islamism ended in a society which felt so little contempt for slaves that, not content with regenerating itself by them, it resigned into their hands authority and government. And thus over the land most accustomed to castes, for a space of five hundred years slave dynasties reigned by right divine.

VI.

The Greek Religions.

Sec. 1.—*The Aspect of Nature in Greece—Its Ruins.*

Judging from one's own impressions, the Greek writers have depicted their country from the horizon of Athens. Plato in his "Phædrus" has reproduced the radiant serenity which all things breathe there; Sophocles in his chorus of Œdipus has celebrated the nightingales of Colonus, and the shade of its olive woods; and still each word of that hymn applies to the same place. But while in certain places Nature continues to murmur the echo of the strophes of the poet, this is not the character of all Greece. The Greeks chose, from the landscape around them, the traits which best accorded with their genius; all that remained outside a certain ideal type, and would not smile with an Olympian smile, they forgot as matter which would not lend itself to the conditions of human art.

If the poets have exaggerated the rivers of Greece out of all proportion with the reality, we must remember that each of them has been the centre of a sovereign society, and could be aggrandised by poetry without belying the nature of things. But the true river of Greece is the Sea, which, circulating from bay to bay, from gulf to gulf, awakes everywhere, by the sight of the Infinite enclosed between two ridges of marble, the senti-

ment of Order in grandeur; and thus Greece among all countries of the world still remains the image of supreme beauty.

Infinity thus limited, man no longer felt oppressed by the immensity of Creation, but began to judge it. He could take in with a glance and master it; he would be its rival, work on the same plan, and even correct it. Thus he turns the parallel beds of its calcareous rocks into the first course of the cyclopean walls on whose heights the gods hold their councils; he rounds the curbs of the valleys into the seats of amphitheatres; and plants on every summit a temple. These monuments of art, built entirely on the plan of the country, give nature the appearance of having been completed and crowned by the hand of man. Everything in the landscape is in harmony with them: the azure of the skies, of the gulfs, of the distant summits, accord with the azure of their friezes and their painted cornices; the horizontal lines of their architecture prolong themselves in the mountains, the promontories, the seas, into the infinite.

When they are erected in the cities, they show in all its nudity the democratic spirit of the Greek religions. In place of the halls, the courts, the pylones which protect the mysteries on the banks of Nile, three steps alone separate them in Greece from the crowd. Dogma is henceforth in full daylight. The Greek Temple belongs to a people who display their gods in the market-place, that they may constantly examine them, interrogate them, judge and destroy them.

Each part of Greece has preserved its own character in its ruins. Athens remains radiant in her misery; but nothing can equal the nakedness of Sparta. The prophecy of Thucydides is fulfilled. This silent people has died without display. Its monument was the City, the Law, the Country. She has left the vanity of ruins to her rival, Messina, the city of slaves.

In Italy the ruins of polytheism have nearly always become Christian monuments; in Greece they have remained pagan. Under their shadow little churches shelter themselves, but they are already dilapidated, while the heathen columns seem clad in eternal youth; as if on this gay earth no other religion could root itself but that of visible beauty. The rising sun still gilds the capitols of Nemea; the thirsty chorus of the grasshoppers under the porch of the Cella, yet invoke Jupiter Pluvius; the hymn of the subterranean gods rises once again from the vaults of byzantine chapels, which, formed of broken pieces of pagan sculptures, seem themselves only half converted to the Christian idea.

SEC. 2.—*The Divine in Humanity—The Greek Religions in their relation to Poetry and Art.*

The god of Paganism had as yet manifested himself only in Nature; the day came when man began to think of looking for him within himself. That infinite which he had seen in the face of the desert, he discovered in his own countenance; he recognised in the proportions of his own body the type of beauty spread out in the rest of things. In place of effacing himself before the majesty of the universe, he exclaimed with the pythoness, as he felt his heart beat: Here, here is the god. He becomes himself the measure, the rule, the term of all things; thus Paganism makes its first step towards the revelation of God made man.

Before Homer, the Greek genius seems hardly to exist; after Alexander, it has ceased to be: outside these limits it depends on Asia; but during that interval, adopting all to change all, it combats, ruins the East by thought quite as much as by the sword.

Where are the vestiges of those revolutions by which the Oriental beliefs passed away before taking the Olympian forms? Since every monument of them has so soon disappeared, we must conclude that they were in contradiction to the nature of its genius. At our first sight of that genius, it is already quite independent. The originality of Greece consists in having thus broken all its rough models; from the abyss of the past this daughter of song arises in full beauty; as Aphrodite, she comes forth a nubile virgin from beneath the waves. Whatever opinion may be held concerning the relations of Greece with the East, between the Rig-Veda and the Iliad, there is an interval of several civilisations; all the difference, in fact, between infancy and youth.

Homer represents the first great change in the world by means of poetry. He cast the old divinities into the mould of humanity, and they came forth an Areopagus of social gods, civilised, eloquent, discussing in the clouds celestial politics. He was all the less scrupulous about altering the ancient dogmas because he did not care to comprehend them. Belief become art; the antique religion was lost, but for a moment the earth felt relieved from a great burden. At no time has man lived so perfectly satisfied with his lot on earth as during the reign of this religion of poets. For a time he gave up searching into the old questions; wherever he found an abyss, he covered it with a divinity, who hid its depths under his purple. These indulgent gods always near him, young, as little given to fore-

sight as he was, constantly reassured him of his own destiny. Provided that the earth smiled at sunrise, what more could he ask? This was the limit of his soul and of his desires. Nourished on nectar, his serenity was so complete that he was hardly troubled even at the fall of Greek society. The cities fell into ruins, still he refused to be anxious. To awake him from this bed of roses, it was needful that Christianity should come to unchain within him an ambition without limits. From that hour he began to look on the earth with disdain. The very pleasures of the sovereigns of Olympus seemed beneath him. Those *prodigious contradictions* of which Pascal speaks took possession of his heart. What are nectar and ambrosia to the man who thirsts for the life of the spirit? The valley of Tempé has become a vale of tears. Man has conquered the infinite at the price of infinite grief.

In bringing back the beliefs of the East to the conditions of beauty alone, Homer marked beforehand the character and destiny of Greece; and thus it was that his poems became the Book of the Law for the Hellenic peoples, so that he became for them what Moses was to the Hebrews. Never again shall we see a society regulated on the plan of an epic. The efforts of Lycurgus, Solon, Pisistratus, are attempts, one after the other, to compel the city to return to this harmonious plan. Before realising itself in Athens the democratic spirit had burst out in the discussions on Olympus. Alexander modelled himself on Achilles, Agesilaus on Agamemnon. Greek society, in fact, tended by a constant approximation to form itself on the ideal of the Iliad and the Odyssey. When at last it thought it had realised its poem, it awoke under the law of the Gospel.

To find that the noblest thoughts of the peoples belong to their first years might astonish us if we did not see that it was so also with each individual life. For it is in the morning of existence, before the corrupting necessities have been felt, that the pure revelation beams forth. Then an ideal of poetry, of truth, an Iliad, an interior Odyssey bursts out in the mind of every man who comes into the world; glorious will he become if he follows it, pusillanimous and only fit for mediocrity if he denies it. Greece was not untrue to the image that had thus been revealed to her; on the contrary, she has made of the poem a truth, of fiction a reality, of presentiment a history.

After the epic, nothing so influenced this religious revolution as sculpture. The first great step was made when the human head was substituted for that of an animal in the statues of the gods. There was a period in Pagan art corresponding to the Middle Age in Christian, with one striking difference. The first perfected the body when it could only give a radiant imbecility

to the head; the last threw holiness into every line of its faces, when its forms were rude and its anatomy barbarous. Greek art commences by the imitation of nature, Christian by the ideal. The one works from without to within, the other from within to without. Does not this difference alone mark the whole interval between Paganism and Christianity?

Phidias did by sculpture what Homer did by poetry. He gave his countrymen a new idea of their gods. The genius that the Greeks had drawn from the contemplation of their beautiful land he threw into the statues of the gods. In them Phidias carried physical beauty to such an elevation that it ceases to be sensual; sublimity appears not only in the faces, but in the least detail of the bodies. Their forms discover absolute harmony of matter and spirit, perfect beauty expressed with mathematical truth. We do not ask if such art is Pagan or Christian; it is perfectly true, perfectly beautiful; it belongs to the Eternal.

In the gods of Phidias the unalterable face of Nature appears under a human form; serene as the azure sky as yet untroubled by tempests, calm as the ocean on the first day of the world, one would say that the soul of the universe rayed forth from their impassible brows. And yet from this epoch of art they are brought more and more under the yoke of the passions, of social ideas, until at last the human alone remains, the god has quite departed. Scopas and Praxiteles succeed Phidias; this change is marked by the group of Niobe; the antique calm of the Olympians gives place to incurable grief. Praxiteles is followed by Lysippus and the Rhodian school; the Niobe by the Hercules Farnese and the Laocoon. How far is this beauty, a little theatrical in its magnificence, from that sovereign art which only expressed eternal thoughts! It is the difference of Euripides from Sophocles. By degrees the austere Venus of early days gives place to the Venus di Medici, the breath of divine things is felt no longer. The pious Greece of Miltiades has vanished, and a corrupt Greece takes its place. And now Alexander in making himself God, the *Jupiter Tonans* of the sculptors, impresses Greek art with its final character. Taking literally the doctrine of Euhemerus, Greece becomes the courtier of political divinities; she who commenced in heaven with Phidias, ends by the apotheosis of the favourite of Hadrian.

SEC. 3.—*Continuation—Of the Drama in its relations with the Greek Religions.*

As Homer changed the gods of the East, the poets change the gods of Homer. The most apparently Pagan of all is Pindar. He loves the lyre, and it is this which explains his popularity among a people who count their years by their games. These games are the uniting links of Greece; he who celebrates them is the priest of the alliance. Expect not from him the naked and rapid simplicity of antiquity; imagine rather Greece clothed in the purple of Tyre. As to his faith, this Hellenic David announces a master more powerful than Jupiter; he peoples Olympus with moral truths, sentiments, ideas which he personifies by the same title as the ancient powers of Nature. Enthusiam, Wisdom, Law, are the new divinities consecrated by the poet.

This Revolution is continued by the Drama. In Œdipus, the hero, wiser than the priest, resolves the enigma by reason alone. More and more the personal god of Homer melts into metaphysical attributes. The Jupiter of Æschylus is etherial space; the earth, the heaven, and something more superior to them all. As the attributes become less and less distinct, it often happens that they are taken one for the other; and this very confusion is a step towards future unity. Not only do the tragic poets decompose the beliefs of Antiquity, but they have presentiments so entirely divine, that they may be called the pagan prophets of Christianity. Thus, in the drama of the "Suppliants" the women repel the yoke of Oriental marriage, their condition has risen by the almost evangelic sentiment of their personal dignity. In Sophocles the growing spirituality of poetry is fully seen. Like an antique vase of purest design, it could not be different without ceasing to be beautiful; and in this incorruptible purity of art you would have a foretaste of Christianity even if the soul of Antigone were not mixed with it. What will it be, then, when Athenian thought meets the poetry of the Psalms and the Word of St. John?

It is an exaggeration to affirm that the Greeks blindly submitted to the yoke of fatality. In the tragedies the chorus nearly always protest against force, and that which we call to-day the religion of success. Whilst the events are passing under its eyes, it represents the living conscience of the human race; it announces a second issue better than the one at which it really assists; it keeps in reserve the last arrows of eternal justice. Hence we see that the power of the Greek drama lies precisely in that which is most misunderstood—the nascent struggle

between fatality and providence. The chorus had also another function, that of calming the mind when the impression became too poignant. In conformity with their happy creed, the Greeks did not like grief to be prolonged unless it appeared crowned with hope. So in the midst of the tears to which this people of poets were so easily moved, the chorus came in to refresh and console them with its hymns. Thus reposing at times, but ever rising, the antique drama reached its *dénouement* the agony intensified by its very moderation.

When I think of Greek comedy I could imagine that I see on the pediment of a great temple the ivy-crowned mask of a colossal satyr rallying the whole creation. What lends a fuller meaning to such a figure is, that up to this time we cannot find throughout all Oriental society a single monument of comic art. All has been hitherto taken seriously—men, things, beliefs. Mockery supposes inward experiences; and a man must have been many times deceived before he will consent to laugh at everything. In Greece, at least, Mankind looked back, and seeing so many phantoms vanished, so many illusions ruined, bursts out into one of those interminable roars of laughter such as Homer attributes to the Olympians. This hilarity mingled with nectar represents the poetry of Aristophanes.

There is in reality so much humour in the Greek nature, that even when bowing down before its gods it cannot help feeling their absurdities. So Aristophanes, a believer so inflexible that he assisted to bring about the death of Socrates, permits himself the utmost license with the gods. There is nothing great, sacred, or solemn at which Aristophanes does not mock. Faith thus allied with sarcasm is one of the most striking originalities of the Greek temper. But all this mockery was corrected in the choruses by the most exalted, heroic, and religious poetry, so that the soul was relieved as soon as it was struck. The comic and the sublime, the demon and the angel, what other poet has thus united these contradictions in one art, so that it seems that of nature itself?

Thus Greek Paganism is mobile and changing as Greece herself. Epic poetry, sculpture, lyric poetry, the drama, all metamorphose one after the other the ancient worship of nature, which, deprived of the authority of its priesthood, is given up to all the fancies of art. Yet, in the midst of these continual variations, the history of Greece is that of a people who, hungering after infinite beauty, seek it in all things, never giving up the pursuit from age to age. Greece arrives at the good by the beautiful. It commences by making itself gods who please by their looks; it makes them perfect without, it enriches them with its own thoughts; then it destroys them by scepticism,

wishful to look more closely at the splendour with which it has clothed them; its eyes fixed on the ideal, it advances without being tired or disconcerted across the ruins of positive religion. Then when at last St. Paul appears in the Areopagus to announce, not the fragile beauty of the art world, but the ever-living and eternal beauty, all eyes turn to him. The education of Greece was finished, it comprehended this language; and as Egypt was converted to the God scourged and suffering, Greece gave herself to the shining God of Mount Tabor.

SEC. 4.—*Of Greek History.*

While the drama develops in times of repose, history develops most in times of revolution. As the stirring events of the Crusades first aroused among Christian peoples an interest in the real as opposed to the legendary, so the Median wars awoke among the Greeks the muse of history. Till then truth and fiction had had the common language of verse; but when two millions of men suddenly poured down upon Greece, the tremendous reality of the fact gave birth to prose, Herodotus and Thucydides succeed Homer and Hesiod.

We moderns imagine that we have invented the philosophy of history. The work of Herodotus, apparently without order, hides a unity in events all the more profound because it was partly hidden from the writer himself. At first he is only a simple traveller wandering from temple to temple. He is pious, but this does not prevent him from weighing all that is told him, and judging it. Long time he wanders in Persia and in Babylon describing their fabulous splendour. He makes us mount their vast walls, he takes us to the summit of the tower of Bel. Then he leads us into Egypt. We enter the labyrinth, we touch the pyramids, we measure this civilisation already in its decline. So far we appear to have followed a capricious traveller. But now the historian reveals himself. After having enabled us to estimate, in some degree, the enormous weight of these empires; after having overwhelmed our imagination with their power, so that we have counted up their riches, their provinces, their cities, we are brought by degrees to see all these provinces, states, kingdoms, united under the power of Xerxes, who suddenly unchains them upon the cradle of Greek society. The longer we have been kept wandering among these immense states, hearing only now and then a feeble echo of Greece, the more the conclusion to which we have been brought takes us by surprise. And as we realise the Homeric host about to precipitate itself on these little states, our one thought is, how will Greece ever resist such a shock? Gradually narrowing his

horizon, Herodotus brings us to the defile of Thermopylæ. That passed, and the mighty host, which seems to dry up the rivers as it marches, brought through, he leads us to Salamis. All now seems lost. On the evening of the battle the generals are ready to disperse before the terrible Asiatic apparition which takes possession even of our minds, for by this long detour we have been made to feel that the struggle involves more than the fate of an empire, that humanity itself is the stake. At last when the battle is gained, when this immense peril so slowly accumulated by the historian is for ever dissipated, then it is that we feel how great a miracle has been accomplished by human heroism: the weak has overborne the strong; right has triumphed over violence; art has surpassed numbers; thought has conquered brute matter. Herodotus has aggrandised and interpreted these events by legends of the Trojan war, the figures of the Homeric heroes appearing amongst the Greeks as propitious genii. Could the wisest reflections have more accorded with the plan, the art of Providence? For Herodotus has composed his work as the hidden divinity composes history. Without showing his object, without proclaiming it beforehand, he attains it; the *dénouement* explains what was obscure at the beginning. Without doubt he does not, as Bossuet, see Providence distinctly in history. But in the end he has done so without being aware of it; and it is this instinct of a general ordination, joined to the simplicity, not only of the diction but of the thought, that gives his work so much grandeur and originality.

Among the historians, even more than among the dramatic poets, the spirit of Paganism is transformed; the enthusiasm of combat impinges on the idea of fate. With heroic subtlety it forces the Delphic oracle, so that when it conquers, its garlands, its pæans, and its dances seem only to celebrate the triumph of the human will. The historians leave the issue uncertain to the last, knowing well that a thought may turn the balance. In the harangues which they introduce they give expression to that liberty of great souls which, rising above fate, commands great events. In the midst of the tumults of the world they proclaim the independence of thought; they maintain, they reassert the rights of justice, reason, and conscience; they follow the very nature of things, since every history is in itself a tragedy in which liberty and destiny struggle together. When souls are strong, as among the Greeks, necessity yields; in our day, souls being mute, fate carries the day. In the eyes of historians, statesmen, and philosophers, there is nothing so eloquent as the force of facts. Things speak, man is silent, resignation becomes inertia, we are in danger of ending in a Christian fatalism as the ancients did in a pagan one.

As the history of Herodotus is of the nature of the epic, so that of Thucydides resembles the drama; the one relating how the unity of Greek society was formed at Salamis, the other how that unity was broken by the Peloponnesian War. In the midst of the various chances of the struggle, what always appears in the mind of the historian is the idea of two races at war, the struggle of two religious and political systems, aristocracy and democracy, tradition and innovation. These systems are personified in the most striking manner in Sparta and Athens, so that the subject has at the same time universal interest and a precise form. On the side of the Dorians, religious tradition, rigid worship, the old royalty of the heroic times, often the cold cruelty of the reason of state; on that of the Ionians, philosophic scepticism, profanation of temples, bloody caprices, and sublime contradictions. What can be finer than that day when, after having condemned the traitorous people of Mitylene to extermination, Athens, having passed a sleepless night, revokes her decree, and despatches in hot haste another bark to overtake that which had gone forth with the decree of death.

Sometimes this struggle of beliefs, races, customs, is set forth in a still more energetic manner by a dialogue between the two cities. In Thucydides even more than in Herodotus Oriental Fate is for ever conquered, since that which above all things fixes itself on the mind are those noble discourses, those grand words that always govern the storm. Each one becomes his own providence, the tribune replacing the tripod; this is the keynote of the history. Outwardly all the great political characters in Thucydides have the same character of repose, moderation, impassible coolness: so utterly different to the passion distinctive of the epoch of Demosthenes. On the morrow of the Median wars, the Greek orators, feeling the responsibility of their temporary royalty, considered it necessary to moderate the impatience of the people, filled with pride at their success. The great effort of these Greeks was to possess themselves. But later on, when the forces of Sparta and Athens had destroyed each other, the people were worn out, and above all things wished for rest. Then it was necessary for Demosthenes to excite, to spur on the breathless people. Thus his orations were stinging, scourging, burning in their passion and menace.

Modern orators seem to have renounced this struggle of the soul with events and with society. They would be the expression of their time, rather than dominate it; they fear to be alone, the royalty of speech ought, it would seem, to exist no more for any one. If opinion ferments, the orator is violent; if the people yields, the orator bends his knee. With the

Greeks the word of the Jupiter of Athens descended into the tribune as pure reason descends into the clouds of intelligence. They recognised this solitary eloquence as a heritage of the heroic royalty of primitive times, and gave the grand spectacle of a people ever discontented, but always kept in check by the tyranny of reason.

Although Thucydides wrote his history in exile, he does not in all his eight books utter one word of complaint or apology. Yet exile is to be seen in every line, and the necessity he was under of restraining himself adds a natural austerity to his genius. The more such souls inwardly repress themselves the more they rule; thought irritated by wounds, leaves in each word the trace of an entire life.

Democracy and aristocracy having destroyed each other, Alexander finished the victory of the West over the East. The Greek spirit triumphed; but Greece was no more. Henceforth solitary great men appear in place of peoples. Thebes is summed up in Epaminondas. To meet this new revolution, history takes the form of biography. In Plutarch we have a series of isolated figures, with so little relation one to the other, that it would seem as if the religious foundation which once united them had vanished. They appear as a series of noble statues whose common pedestal is the tomb of Greece.

SEC. 5.—*Philosophy in its relations with Religion—Fall of Polytheism.*

In searching out the causes of civil and political revolutions, the Greek philosophers have forgotten nothing but religion. The result is that they have substituted for the general principle as many secondary motives as there are cities in the state and states in Greece. Properly speaking, there is only one revolution in antiquity, that which nearly everywhere and at the same time caused royalty to give place to the republic, hereditary succession to election. The historians scarcely give any explanation of this change, at once so striking and unanimous.

As long as worship consisted in the adoration of primitive nature, the foundation of authority remained enveloped in darkness;—this is the epoch of divine right; rulers draw their legitimacy from the night of chaos. When, however, humanity makes its own apotheosis under the form of the Olympians, it is impossible that it should any longer submit to a power which does not also spring from itself. To deify the general reason was to consecrate the sovereignty of all; in other words, to found a republican government in place of constitutions like those of the Oriental monarchies. It is the philosopher rather

than the priest who henceforth becomes the legislator. The Areopagus succeeded to the dynasty of Theseus. The third revolution takes place; the degenerate gods represent only ancient kings immortalised by the peoples; and this last doctrine, springing up under Alexander, becomes the sanction of the Macedonian despotism.

As a result of the perpetual mobility of dogma, the Greek philosophers knew nothing of those violent struggles that divide science and religion. The earliest among them seem to enclose, each in his particular system, the soul of one of the extinct religions. Thus that of Egypt seems to live again in Thales, Persia in Heraclitus, the East in Pythagorus.

Besides, as soon as philosophy finds itself embarrassed by Religion, it confounds it with Art, since it can thus condemn with impunity what it must respect in the priest. Hopeless, very soon, of bringing the national beliefs to the conditions of truth, it grants them nothing, ignoring them, or using them only as an ornament. Crowned but yesterday, its vices are those of the parvenu. It abandons itself to tyrannical fancies, persuaded that since it is mistress it can do all things—build or destroy, affirm or deny, create and abolish the nature of things by the sole authority of reasoning.

Socrates, who brought back order into this chaos, is in philosophy that which Phidias is in statuary. Each of his disciples was in his hands as a rude block in the hands of the sculptor, which he went on correcting until upon the common humanity he brought out in relief the inner divinity. On the one hand, he carried the serenity of Homer into the abysses of the Spirit, moving playfully amongst the most terrific problems; on the other, leading all back to man; judging all by that standard, he reduced to system the leading characteristics of the Greek beliefs, and under these two aspects summed up the spirit of the religions they accused him of wishing to destroy.

Modern historians have misconceived the original grandeur of Greek scepticism. Far from being troubled at his doubt, the Greek retired into it as into his natural dwelling-place. He sought it in every way, only impatient that he could not get rid of the little faith which remained to him. His belief never having been immutable, he felt no fear in passing from faith to doubt. Like Æneas with the golden branch in the midst of the darkness of the Styx, he braved the phantoms and dispersed them. With every hope he trod under foot he thought he had broken the enchantment of a sophism, only breathing freely when he had quite despoiled himself of every belief. Arrived at this utter nakedness he rejoiced, crying that now he tasted the pleasures of God. Nor was this the bitter laugh of a spirit

undeceived, but rather an heroic scepticism, which, feeling that the world reposed on an illusion, refused to acquiesce in it, preserving its equilibrium on the ruins of all certitude; it was a prophetic, enthusiastic doubt, which, exorcising the vain spectres of intelligence, passed the bounds of the pagan world, and prepared without impatience the bounds of the future order. The pagan sceptic denied nothing, affirmed nothing; he did better, he waited.

The ground of the Greek philosophy as of its religion being the identity of the human reason with the divine, it follows that all its schools have one common end, the calm, imperturbable repose of the Olympians. All form their sage on the model of impassible marbles of Phidias. This is why the sublime in antique morality has in it something theatrical, man is always trying to play the god. He does his best to simulate the supreme felicity; he disguises his misery under apathy; he poses as a Hercules. This spiritual Hercules who, by his labours, makes himself divine, is the patron, the model of the great schools of the West. They fashion themselves on him as on the imitation of a pagan Christ.

The glory of Stoicism is to have been the first to recognise one God under the different masks of polytheism. How this idea penetrated by degrees into religion may be seen in the hymns attributed to Orpheus. Remade from age to age, those which remain were composed in the last hours of paganism. These hymns are addressed individually to each of the gods of polytheism; but the persons who formerly were so easily distinguished are here confounded into one vague divinity, we can scarcely distinguish one from the other, masculine or feminine; great or little, all these powers receive the same invocations, the same prayers, the same names. In the bosom of each we discover the infinite, which stretches itself so as to envelop and absorb all the rest.

The East had developed the dogma of Incarnation in the Divine Trinity; Judæa led this Trinity back again to Unity; Greece joined to it the idea of God in man. Thus the Old Testament of the sacred and profane was completed.

VII.

The Roman Religions.

Sec. 1.—*Religion and Policy.*

A new age commences, of which the term is already predicted by the sybils. Rome is founded; and for the first time a new society comes into existence without a religious principle peculiar to itself. It lives on the common fund of former worships, doing nothing more than borrowing and concentrating the universal tradition of paganism. Its own rude beliefs are effaced at the first breath of the more brilliant beliefs of the rest of mankind. Politically the mistress of other nations, Rome serves them religiously. No memory of the new-born world, no impression of the beginning of things, no familiarity with the heavenly powers, nothing but Reasons of State, above all Fear. Everything indicates that the Religions of Nature are worn out and about to perish; and it follows, therefore, that the Roman City, which lives by feeding on their remains, will be the last society and the final revolution of the pagan world.

The originality of the Romans consists in the relations that they establish between the Religions and the political State. They found their own gods so inferior to those of Italy, Greece, and Asia, that they never entertain the idea of imposing their worship on the world; on the contrary, they bow before the gods of the people they conquer. Afraid of every god they hear of, they determine from the very first to compromise themselves with none, but to place them all, without discussion, in the Capitol; meanwhile doing their best to embroil these same deities with the societies which adore them. In this manner they change the whole Right Divine of antiquity; and if we watch, we shall see that the whole course of their history has resulted from the revolution they thus produce in Oriental and Greek paganism.

When the Romans besieged Veii, they approached the national goddess of the Veians and said to her, "Do you wish to go to Rome, Juno?" The foreign goddess assenting, was carried into the walls of Rome, her people following her, and receiving the right of citizenship. This history repeated a hundred times, is that of each of the Roman conquests. Before crossing the enemy's territory, a herald with veiled face, or a consul, repeated the sacred formula:—

"If there is here a god or goddess that has under his or her

protection this city, we supplicate and adjure them to quit and abandon these temples, and to go out of these walls, to inspire in them terror and oblivion and to come to Rome, to me and to mine; in order that our altars and sanctuaries, being more agreeable and precious to them, they may charge themselves with the care of the Roman people and of my soldiers, it being agreed and understood that we vow to them temples and games."

With this formula the earth has been conquered. The Roman gods, like birds of prey, are enticed to Rome by bait; the Romans dared not take them captive, so they gained them first, the better to gain their people. For the people who were thus deserted of their gods could find no other way of recovering their sacred things than by following them. Hence the desire which awoke among them to form part of the victorious city where their religion had its focus.

But even if permitted to do so, they entered as a people rejected by their gods. Struck by a sort of interdict they became plebeians. And since they could not reconcile themselves with their own deities except through the mediation of the Roman people, they fell into the position of clients to those who were thus able to become their guardians and patrons. Their utter powerlessness in matters of religion was expressed by this sacramental phrase: "The plebeians have lost the right of the auspices."

This is the foundation of the Roman aristocracy; it rests on the principle of the inequality of classes before the gods. The principle of Oriental caste reappears on the banks of the Tiber, and continues just as long as the people believe that the patricians alone have hands clean enough to touch sacred things. For it is evident that no law, no change, no revolution can give these men an equality which they themselves regard as sacrilege.

Where the immortals refuse to speak to the plebeian, all is closed to him as by an invisible hand. After having lost his altars he wanders, legally blind. Unhappy the man who dares lift the veil that surrounds the plebeian. The decemvir Tullus is sewn up in a sack and thrown into the Tiber for having divulged the formulas of the civil rites. This interdict is maintained by the systematic worship of *Fear*, which was everywhere at the heart of the Roman genius.

How did these colleges of priests of Paleness and Fear originate? What have been the rites by which they have filled the people with a spiritual terror? Look at the most ancient bas-reliefs of their truly national god *Terror*. With mouth half opened, hair dishevelled, she it is that has com-

municated that shuddering which the Romans appear always to experience at the slightest presage, or before the least important of the pagan gods. In that haggard livid face we see the stupor which froze the soul of the plebeian in a city where all for him was mystery, danger, malediction. The reign of the gods of Paleness and Fear was the golden age for the Roman aristocracy. In comparison with this bond of terror, what was the chain of the debtor in the prison-house of the creditor?

When at last the idea of the equality of all men returned to the heart of the plebeian, many scruples arise before he dares to vindicate it; whence the entirely new character of the democratic struggles in Rome. The proletarians do not revolt against the authority of the nobility. The utmost they do is to retire on the Aventinus or the Janiculus. Their insurrection is a flight; they feel that in the city, where the immortals refuse them everything, the ground would open under their feet. Historians only see in these plebeian secessions moderation of spirit; they are really the effect of interdict and religious terrorism.

It is important to note with what prodigious subtlety the Aristocracy defends, as a stronghold, its privilege in holy things. When it is menaced it grants the common people everything except religious reform. That one point shelved, it willingly cedes all, because it knows very well it can resume all; for nothing so far is given except by its good right and pleasure. The people therefore only conquer the word, while the aristocracy keep the thing.

In a state where existence was affected by religion at every turn, he who had the religious right was master of all; and, on the other hand, he who had it not was in vain possessed of others. Of what use was it to be able to elect consuls, if the augur could always annul the election by his veto? How was it possible to make a supreme magistrate of a man to whom the gods refused to speak? In a country where nothing could be done without the intervention of the augural right, not a house built nor a wall or an oven raised, not a door put on its hinges nor a boundary stone fixed, it is clear as day that he who kept the religious monopoly must remain master of all. That the Roman plebeians should have remained blind for three centuries to so simple a fact, would be incomprehensible if we did not see the same state of things at the present day in the greater part of Europe.

The democratic revolution which gave power to the decemvirs, proved on this very account an illusion. The twelve tables, in maintaining the sacred privilege, made no real change either in the condition of the person or of property. The people

were deceived, they knew not why. This is the real foundation of the story of Virginia.

The people struggled blindly, they gnawed the bit; but they could not find out what it was restrained them. Without stirring, the nobility held the bridle by the clause which it left standing in every change of the constitution: "Let the auspices be incommunicable to the people." The blind despair of the first, the tranquil majesty of the others, such is the temperament of Rome as long as this imperial secret continues.

As long as a people does not carry the democratic spirit into the constitution of its religion, it attempts in vain to emancipate itself from the tutelage of the aristocracy; and no history puts this truth in broader daylight than the Roman. Its boldest revolutions are mere lures, its most humane laws a dead letter. Before they carried revolution into religion the plebeians had conquered all kinds of rights; the tribunate, the consulship, accession to nearly every magisterial office, reform of debts, chastity in the family with the solemn marriage with patricians: all these things were written in the laws, yet remained impracticable. When the plebeians had the right they dared not exercise it; when they dared, a patrician was always found ready, at a given point, to declare that he had heard the thunder roll; the divinities of *Palor* and *Fright* were exhibited, and the plebs fell back in dismay.

The true day of emancipation was that upon which Publius Decius openly claimed equality of religious rights: if the plebeians could have mural crowns, and sit in curule chairs, why should they be everlastingly incapable of holding the augur's wand? That day as terrible a light shone in antiquity as when Luther burned the papal bull; the principle of the ancient authority was overturned.

This revolution changed all in Rome. Before it occurred every effort of the democracy was illusory, they could not get hold of the future; afterwards all the efforts of the aristocracy were vain, they could never again get possession of the past. Before the change the democracy dared not exact it; after it was accomplished the nobility dared not abolish it. Yet there was one more chance. When the plebeian magistrates met with some reverses, the patricians immediately declared that it was plain that a promiscuous priesthood was odious to the gods. However, notwithstanding the temptation, the people remained true to themselves, and all was consummated.

It was a revolution analogous to that which in modern Europe, by establishing liberty of worship, destroyed the principle of divine right. The privilege of the auspices once attacked, nothing could save it; and once abolished it could by

no means be restored. The democracy entered by this breach, and it now became impossible to prevent the transformation of the family, of property, of citizenship, and of all the social relations. After religious equality came civil equality, by the publicity of the laws, by the extension of the right of citizenship, by the application of the agrarian laws. Nothing could any longer stop the torrent.

From that day there were two men who never died, and who never ceased to shake the old society: the tribune in political law; the prætor in civil law.

Thus it is that Revolutions which change the religious order are the only ones upon which you can certainly count. For just as it seems at first impossible that such conquests should be made, it seems afterwards impossible to lose them; those who once thought they never could have been wrested from them quickly sinking into such a state of depression as to be unable to do anything to recover the position.

Directly the Roman aristocracy felt itself attacked mortally, it became demoralised, whereas the plebeians from the time of the reform of the religious constitution gave up all thought of quitting Rome. With the mysteries of religion they possessed the mysteries of the laws; with the laws the means of profiting from their victory; they knew the sacred formulas by which each revolution in the division of the public lands could be rooted. Why quit the city? the gods were with them as much as with the patricians.

Sec. 2.—*Rome and the World.*

So superstitiously jealous was the policy of Rome, that it was a crime to mention the name of the national deity; the greater part of the people lived and died without ever knowing it. Even such men as Cicero and Virgil were not in the secrets of the priests.

This jealous secrecy about their own gods and selfish covetousness to possess the gods of other nations brought its own punishment. While Greece, who freely lent her gods to the world, founded permanent centres of civilisation everywhere, Rome could do little more than establish camps.

This ambition for conquests purely material, without any desire for moral dominion, was an entirely new thing in the world, and in the end brought about most unexpected results. As there were neither conquerors nor conquered among the gods, there came a time when there were neither conquerors nor conquered among the peoples. Fancying that they only used the religions as instruments of conquest, the Romans did not

see that they were themselves being gradually dominated by the spirit of the religions with which they played. Dupes of their own sacred diplomacy, these proud patricians did not see that the levelling of the privileged gods drew after it the levelling of civil privileges. It seemed a clever thing to make the very religions of their enemies assist in their subjugation. But it led to the indigenous gods in the Capitol having to retire more and more to make way for the foreign gods, so that in the end the foreign religions became stronger than the ancient constitution, and ruined it. Because the Romans did not found their conquests on religious sovereignty, and their city on a national worship, they engulphed immense empires without ever being able to fill up the inward emptiness of their city. The more peoples they conquered, the more they became themselves dependent on the worships, the religions, and the spirit of the foreigner. In their conquest of the world, each victory diminished the Roman spirit and brought a hostile soul into Rome.

For these foreign religions were indeed the very soul, the thought, the national genius, the eternal hope of the strangers; where was their god, there was their right. And how could they renounce social life or believe it irrevocably lost, when they saw the principle of hope and of life crowned in the Pantheon? No case is more striking than that of the Samnites; the massacre of a whole people does not prevent Samnium conquering the right of citizenship. What is the meaning of this history, in which the conquered always triumph over the conquerors?

The truth is that the Romans were ignorant of the art of moral extermination, the only one that can really kill. Their materialism or their indifference deceived them. They had no idea how to strike that mortal blow which kills a moral being like a people, and so secure themselves against reprisals. Carthage excepted, whose moral yoke they rejected in refusing her unsocial rites, they scarcely ever really got rid of an enemy. But everywhere else in their conquests there are constantly revolts, risings, and after each new victory new exactions by the conquered. Returning from one of his victories, Scipio met in the Forum the peoples whom he thought he had exterminated. We know his answer to his interrupters—"I have no fear of the men that I brought here in chains, since I see them to-day as sovereigns."

They could not even reign in peace over the slave, not having annulled him morally. Possessing his altars, his servile gods, his Manes, his day of Saturnalia, the slave everywhere else so complacent and so mute could not forget he was a man; and

under the shelter of the goddess of Syria he gave his masters almost as much anxiety as the world of freedmen.

After the social war, that is, after centuries of carnage, the historians, not being able to understand how the conscience of social life survived so many murders, begin to deny the facts, failing to recognise that the soul of each subjugated nation was preserved and perpetuated with the national god. Again, the promptitude with which so many peoples seek to confound themselves in one, this intimate alliance of men of such different races, would be incredible if we did not remember their familiar union in the Roman Pantheon. For this unity of religion once recognised, what was there extraordinary in the social unity of the populations?

The failure of a man like Hannibal to attract to his cause one of the Italian peoples, would seem due to the unsocial worship of Carthage. The anthropophagous religion of Baal was what, without doubt, he bitterly called "the fortune of Carthage."

The Roman aristocracy attempted two contradictory things; on the one hand, they wished to impose an Oriental immobility on Roman society, while on the other, in order to aggrandise the state by conquests, they consecrated the principle of change in religion.

During the civil wars the force of passion seems for a moment to have enlightened every party; there was not then a political revolution which did not support itself on a religious revolution. In order to establish Democracy, the party of Marius introduced it into religion, in giving the people the right to elect the priests. Sylla, on the contrary, abolished this new law, and restored the right of election to the sacred college. Although the base of the whole system of Sylla, it was only a half-measure, since it did not go far enough to stifle the plebeian right. So it was effaced at the first breath, and popular election re-established it as soon as Democracy reappeared with Cæsar.

It was in vain for Sylla to slaughter the Athenians as long as he failed to conquer the spirit of Greek novelty. And this he was so far from doing that, when he pillaged the temple of Delphi, and carried away the image of the god of the Greeks, he himself fell down and adored it directly he found himself in peril. The restorer of the old Roman genius forgot nothing but the Roman gods. The only means by which Sylla could have re-established the old aristocratic constitution he did not take. With his twenty-four axes no one would have dared to resist him had he refused the people their altars and taken from them the right of the auspices. But the man who recoiled before no murder trembled in the presence of the plebeian divinities. So his work never stood. It is a rare thing, indeed,

to find boldness of mind joined to boldness of character. Few men have the courage to do what is necessary to surmount a mortal peril. To arm the slaves was the only thing that could have saved Catilina; but it was just the one thing he dared not do.

However, the patricians had occasional glimpses of the necessity of getting rid of the new worships if the ancient society was to be maintained, but after a momentary effort they fell into the old indifference. The fact was, they cared so little for their own religion that they did not realise the danger of being invaded by the religions of the rest of the world. It was only when they had quite ceased to believe in religion at all that they began to repress such worships as they believed dangerous to the state; so that amongst the Romans we may say faith was tolerant, incredulity exclusive.

Thus these people, so intrepid in bloodshed, were more timid than any in the world of spirits. From Virgil to Statius there is but one voice on this subject. The cry of Lucretius pierces the temples as of a soul long stifled by terror in a conventional world that has suddenly found its liberty in the Infinite. The more the witnesses of antiquity are examined, the more does it appear certain that the basis of the religion of a Roman was fear of the intelligible universe. He seems to exist in a sort of spiritual panic which distinguishes nothing, measures nothing; adoring without choice every power of which he hears, the wicked as much as the good: bad Fortune; the goddess Febris—fever; the goddess Cloacina, who presided over the sewers; and the god Terror himself. A clap of thunder, a flash of lightning, the fall of a grasshopper, is enough to make these masters of the world turn pale. When faith has disappeared, there still remains in them a depth of stupor which discovers itself in every matter in which religion is concerned. Decorum, Custom, become for them so many gods-termini which they dare not displace. Boldness of character, timidity in thought,—this is still the temperament of the modern nations of the Latin race.

Finally, these foreign religions, which even Marius and Sylla had spared, conquered the conquerors. For from the peoples or cities they represented arose not complaint but commands; in the end the vanquished themselves chose the Cæsars, and forced them on Rome. It was Mercury Teutates who opened to the Germans the gate on the Flaminian way. Then it was seen that Rome had only conquered for her enemies. Directly the Religions ceased to be used as a political weapon they rapidly wore out. First went the indigenous gods, next the Greek, then the Egyptian, the Syrian, and finally the Oriental. The supremacy of each marks a phase in the history of Rome—the kings, the

republic, the empire, from its rise to its fall. When the old mythology was quite ruined, the Roman world cracked to its very foundation, the earth gave way because the heavens fell.

SEC. 3.—*The Cæsars—The Religion of the Law—End of the Ancient City.*

The result of inventing auspices to suit policy, was to destroy all religious faith in the people; and as with them Religion was the same thing as Fear, they were set free from the double curb at one and the same time. Henceforth they believed in nothing but force; a condition that necessarily brought about the Empire. Valerius Maximus astonished no one when, in the preface to his book, he said to Tiberius: "Other divinities are only in opinion, thy Divinity we see and touch in thee."

From the times of Ennius the patricians had entertained the idea that the gods were only great men deified. This doctrine admitted, there was no Cæsar who did not feel himself equal to Saturn or Hercules. If Jupiter was only a little king of Crete, why should not the master of the Roman world be the divinity of his time? This imitation of the Olympians explains the monstrous condition in which the greater part of the emperors lived. Cæsar's good sense resisted it; the delirium commenced with Antoninus, who called himself Father Bacchus; Caligula said to Jupiter, "Kill me, or I will kill thee." Domitian signs his decrees, "Your Lord and your God." But the most insensate of all these illuminati of Euhemerism was Heliogabalus, who wished to be called "the Lord Sun."

The very thing that seemed to render this folly universal was the very thing which saved it. This confusion of gods in the Roman system forced home the conviction that, under many names, there could only be One. As soon as Paganism had grasped the idea of unity, it is astonishing how quickly it impresses itself on its institutions. The frenzy of the emperors does not prevent it; on the contrary, they appear to work for it. Their own actions may be infamous, but by their side there is a man who represents Reason, so that their constitutions are nearly always liberal and humane. Thus, by hands stained with blood, the freedman, the woman, the minor, the slave are lifted up. Octavius assures both the liberty and the dignity of woman. Tiberius establishes a fund for lending money on land without interest. Nero renders justice free; defends the poor and the freedman, that is to say, nearly everybody. Domitian assures them equality with the knights. Claudius renders the life of the slave as inviolable as that of the freedman.

Hadrian, Commodus, and Alexander protect the slave against prostitution. Caracalla is the author of this magnanimous rescript: "If thou hast given liberty to any one in error, understand that thou canst not recall it." Later on he is indignant at the idea of perpetual fetters in a society of freemen; he concludes by giving social liberty to all who are in the Roman World; that is, to nearly all the earth: so great is the power of a new dogma as soon as it penetrates social institutions, that even the monsters obey it.

The principle of social equality under its pagan form of Stoicism organises itself into law. The human conscience seems to go for nothing in this work. Justice comes down into civil institutions like a sacred geometry. This indomitable force which breaks out, so to speak, of itself, and to which the emperors bow like slaves, is the last miracle of antiquity. They are all equally subject to a kind of legal mathematics, which is continued passively from reign to reign, and fastens them all equally down to the same level. It would seem as if the doctrine of the Stoics, the Soul of the World, had penetrated the social body and developed itself through humanity independently of individuals. A series of bloodthirsty men become the passive instruments of natural equity, conscience manifests itself by those who have lost all conscience, and the most insane co-operate in the work of the highest reason. Roman law and Christianity worked to a common end—the equality of the human race. Thus it was that after the fall of paganism Roman law continued the law of Christian peoples, and that this monstrous epoch of the empire appeared to the Italians an age of felicity.

If we study the edicts of the worst emperors, we shall be struck by the introduction of a crowd of new words into the Latin language, which become necessary to express the entirely new solicitude felt for the weak, the mean, the miserable, the nameless classes of which the law of the twelve tables knew nothing. The interest of the new law is for the poor as against the rich, for the misery of the debtor as against the voracity of the creditor.

Between the edict of Diocletian in favour of the poor, and that of Constantine on behalf of widows and orphans, there is an intimate relationship. They lead one to the other. It is difficult to distinguish the different shades in the edicts of the Pagan and Christian emperors. In the end they all mingle together in the revolution of Justinian; Stoicism and Christianity, Diocletian and Constantine, Ulpian and St. Paul, persecutor and persecuted, all end by being confounded and lost in the ocean of Roman Law.

How was it with such fine laws that life ended by being intolerable? When a struggle is too prolonged, it comes to pass that everything a man is obliged to do in order to succeed depraves him; so that when at last he conquers, he is often no longer worthy of the victory. Thus it was with the Roman democracy. Every condition of society, one after the other, had served towards the establishment of equality, of social unity, so that in the end these great principles burst out with invincible power. But when the great conflict is over and the triumph secure, there is no one in the empire to profit from the new laws. A new world is coming to inherit them.

In the hymns that Velleius Paterculus addresses to Tiberius we see plainly what were the illusions of the higher classes. They ran to meet the servitude of the empire because they expected that it would restore the privileges of the nobility and the senate and all the old order of things; on the contrary, the aristocratic families were exterminated by the Imperial system. Of all the projects attributed to Catiline—burning of Rome, proscription of the rich, murder of the nobility, annihilation of all social superiority—there is not one which has not been taken up by one or other of the emperors. The conspiracy against the old order of things hidden under the eagles of Marius, was consummated by the Cæsars; the old society perished by the hands called to save it.

Unity of gods accomplished by Stoicism; unity of the social world by the Emperors: the pagan city could go no further. The greatest trial for a society is to pass from one religion to another; antique society disappeared in the effort. As soon as Arcadius and Honorius ordered the destruction of the pagan monuments, the spirits of paganism fled away, and the Roman Empire was engulphed with the foundations of the last temple.

The multitude of nationalities, hostile one to the other, of which the ancient city was formed, had their bond in the alliance of their gods; that broken, the bundle went to pieces. Paganism disappeared, leaving an immense void; the Barbarians had nothing to do but to enter. Their conversion to Christianity added much to their force; the new religion for a long time seemed the condemnation of the old, so that they felt in entering into the Roman lands that they were in a world which belonged to them; they considered themselves, moreover, the executors of a mission of vengeance against the old religion; and in this idea they were supported by the Christian churches. This was in itself an incomparable moral force, giving to their last irruptions all the energy of a revolution of nature.

As each portion of the ancient world has brought some peculiar idea into Christianity—the East, the worship of Incar-

nation; Greece, Platonism—Rome has brought into its walls the spirit of Unity and the religion of Fear. From the earliest days of the Empire, the Senate sitting in conclave decided on religious questions between the priesthoods of paganism. The pontiff of Jupiter Capitolinus was high priest of the universe; it was not a great step to the principle of Roman Catholicism.

It is a striking fact that it is the Christian emperors who re-introduce inequality before the law. Already the Gospel gives place to Catholicism, Antiquity to the Middle Age. The form of the new society exists in principle in the hierarchy, and the feudal inequalities of the new priesthood; the barbaric peoples have only to flow over and fill the new social mould.

In the sepulchral bas-reliefs a mournful Genius may be seen who with one hand extinguishes his torch, while with the other he conducts a horseman, dead and veiled, to the Hells. It is the Genius of the dead religions: he leads into the abyss the Roman people veiled in darkness and slavery.

THE END.

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